

Chinese race, but the Full Court decided that, being a company resident in Western Australia, it was an entity different from a person. A company could have no nationality; the proprietor would be the company.

Question passed, amendment agreed to.
Resolution reported; report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8.25 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 20th August, 1907.

	PAGE
Question: Railway Refreshment Room, Boyanup	904
Chairman of Committees, Election	904
Bills: Permanent Reserve Revestment, Council's Amendment	905
Land Tax Assessment (machinery measure), 2a. resumed, adjourned	905
Port Hedland-Marble Bar Railway, Com. reported	923
Minimum Wage, Subletting, discussion on Port Hedland Bill	933

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

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Mines: 1, Papers dealing with the appointment of Inspectors of Mines. 2, Extra papers dealing with the accusations made by the member for Cue against the Inspector of Mines in the Cue District.

QUESTION—RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOM, BOYANUP.

Mr. UNDERWOOD asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What rent is paid for the Boyanup Refreshment Room and

Book Stall? 2, When does the present lease expire? 3, Were tenders called for the lease, and when? 4, In future will the department give public notice before a lease is granted?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Refreshment Room, £2 10s. per month; Bookstall, £1 10s. per annum. 2, The Refreshment Room is let on a monthly tenancy. The Bookstall lease expires on the 31st May, 1908. 3, Yes. Refreshment Room, January, 1900; Bookstall, May, 1905. 4, Section 59 of the Government Railways Act provides for tenders being called, and this is always done in the event of a tenancy expiring or a room becoming vacant. In regard to the Refreshment Room, I might add that H. M. Beigle's tender was accepted; on the 12th July, 1900, approval was given to the transfer of the lease to Viola Clowes; and on the 28th May, 1902, the transfer from Viola Clowes to Eliza Jane Dinham, the present lessee was approved.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, ELECTION.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I move "That Mr. Daglish do take the Chair as Chairman of Committees of the House." I submit this proposal with every confidence, as members are acquainted with the special qualifications the hon. member has for the position. His long parliamentary experience coupled with his knowledge of the procedure, qualify him to fill the position with success.

Mr. W. B. GORDON: I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

Mr. E. DAGLISH (on taking the Chair): I have to thank hon. members for the honour they have done me, and the confidence they have reposed in me in appointing me to this position. I shall endeavour as Chairman, to the best of my ability, to apply the Standing Orders with a degree of common sense; and I shall always endeavour to show the strictest impartiality in controlling the proceedings of Committees.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE RE-VESTMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered in Committee; *Mr. Daghish* in the Chair; *the Premier* in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, line 6—strike out “as to his former estate” :

The PREMIER : These words were struck out at the instance of some legal members of another place, and he was informed by the Parliamentary Draftsman that they were not essential. He moved—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. BATH : What was the opinion of the Attorney General in regard to the proposed amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : The hon. member wished to know if his (the Attorney General's) opinion differed. [*Mr. Bath* : No.] The reason, he understood, why the words were struck out in another place was because it was submitted that the Crown were owners of the land, and when some grant of land was declared void by process of law, the land reverted to the Crown. The words were originally put in the Bill as submitted to the House, in conformity with the language of the Transfer of Land Act Amendment Act, 60 Vict., No. 22, which was drawn by Dr. Smith, late Parliamentary Draftsman, and in drawing that section he used the words “revest in His Majesty as of his former estate.” and as a consequence the Parliamentary Draftsman followed the words of that section. Whether the words were left in or struck out, the effect of the Bill would be to revest in the Crown certain land which was the subject of a grant in favour of the Kalgoorlie Trades Gala Society.

Question passed, amendment agreed to.

Message accordingly returned to the Legislative Council.

BILL—LAND TAX ASSESSMENT.

Machinery Measure, Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th August.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill) : During the course of the speech made by the

Colonial Treasurer in introducing this Bill, in reply to an interjection I made to the effect that many of the things he had prophesied in 1905 and even since that date had not come to pass, he stated, “I am not aware I prophesied anything that did not become absolutely true;” and he went on to say, “I think all my statements have been borne out by results.” Honourable members both on the Ministerial and Opposition side will have a lively recollection that at the termination of last session, when the Land Tax Assessment Bill was returned from the Legislative Council, we had the Treasurer's promise and prophecy that a special session would be held in February last. If that promise or prophecy has come true, this is the coldest and dampest February I have ever experienced in Western Australia. The Colonial Treasurer was also somewhat wide of the mark in making that statement by reason of the fact that in 1905 he was an opponent of any measure of land values taxation. In the course of the speech last session and in his speech the other night in introducing the Bill on the second occasion, we had a rather lame attempt by him to justify the measure, both from the point of view of the financial position of the State and also on the question of the equity of its incidence. So far as the Colonial Treasurer's speech is concerned, the greater portion of it was not so much a justification of land values taxation as a principle, or even as an expedient, as it was an attempt, by way of a financial statement, to reply to criticisms of hon. members on this side of the House. It would have been better had that speech come from the Colonial Treasurer on the Address-in-Reply when we looked for a statement from him as to the financial position. However, we may say that it is better late than never, and that this House had a right to expect from the gentleman controlling the finances some reply to the criticisms and some justification of the present financial position of the State. So far as that financial position is concerned, I have no intention, in speaking to the second reading of the Bill, to traverse the arguments or the figures given by the

Treasurer. I will reserve that to a time when we shall have fuller particulars of the loan expenditure and until we have heard from him on the Budget statement the proposals and intentions of the Government as to the future. I would like, however, to refer to some figures which he gave to this House and which it is essential should be studied in relation to this proposal for new taxation in order to make up some of the deficiency. The Treasurer pointed out that, even with certain contingencies happening which would place in the most favourable light our financial position, he anticipated that at the close of the financial year ended 30th June, 1908, we would have a deficit on the year's operations of £106,000 and an accumulated deficit by that time of £314,000. The Colonial Treasurer seemed to treat very lightly the possibility of such a large accumulated deficit, and he went on to say it was not in any way an indication of a deplorable condition of the finances. He went farther and attempted to justify his own attitude, as the person charged with administering the finances of the State, by saying that in New South Wales and other States they had had accumulated deficits and had covered them by short-dated Treasury bills. Whatever the other States have done—and I do not wish to dispute that they have followed that course—it is no argument or possible justification for Western Australia to pursue the same course, because it amounts to this: we have either to wait upon the possibility of good seasons in the future, or perhaps unexampled seasons of prosperity, to bring in a surplus to cover the deficit, or, as an alternative, we shall have to transfer this accumulated deficit to indebtedness. Then it will mean that in the future we will have to pay interest and sinking fund on an amount in no sense represented on the credit side by reproductive work. That is a course which would be disastrous to pursue. Whatever may have been the attitude adopted by Treasurers in the other States, I think every member will agree that the one honest course we should pursue is to devise means, not only for balancing the revenue

and expenditure for the current financial year, but also to have liquidated at the earliest moment the accumulated deficit which the administration of the Colonial Treasurer and his colleagues has brought about to this State. We have from the Colonial Treasurer the proposal to meet this by the imposition of this tax, the machinery for the collection of which we have before us now. The amount which he proposes to raise, as stated in the land tax papers we have had placed before us, is £60,073. This amount is to meet a deficit on this year's operations of £106,000 and, as I have said before, an accumulated deficit of over £300,000. In view of this fact, apart altogether from the justice of land values taxation, is it not a preposterous proposition for him to place before this House, in proposing to meet this deficit, deliberately to deprive himself of at least £30,000 owing to the proposals for exemptions and rebates included in the measure? I referred to this during the course of last session in my criticism of the Bill then introduced, and although we have in this measure the Bill as it finally passed the Assembly last session, I would urge hon. members to consider the question as to whether it is worth while to retain these exemptions and rebates in view of the necessity of raising a very considerable amount of money in order to square the finances. I also wish to refer to what I can only term as the very unsatisfactory attitude of the present Ministerial supporters of this Bill. [*The Premier* : How did you arrive at the amount of exemptions?] That was the amount which the Premier in his speech on the second reading last session said would be lost by reason of the rebates and exemptions included in the Bill, and the Colonial Treasurer has stated that the valuations this session tally with those submitted last session. I therefore have accepted his figures and have stated that the amount would be practically the same for the current financial year as was then thought, namely £30,000. I wish to refer to the very unsatisfactory attitude of the present supporters of the Ministry. There are at least seven or eight members on the Ministerial side of the House who,

in the course of their speeches on the Address-in-Reply or delivered in the country, have declared their uncompromising opposition to the land tax proposals of the Government. Could there be any more vital principle in a programme of any Government than one for new taxation, and a proposal of such importance as a tax on unimproved land values? If there are any members on the Ministerial side who distinctly are opposed to that principle then it is their duty to sit on the Opposition side of the House. They have no right to be giving passive support to a Government while they are opposed to such a vital principle as this. I am sure that the division list this session will be practically the same as last and that the Government will have to rely absolutely on members on this side of the House in order to carry the Bill through the Assembly. That being the position, if hon. members on this side of the House walk out of the Chamber and refuse to vote, the Government cannot carry through this very vital proposal. [*The Attorney General*: It will be carried by three to one.] The Attorney General knows that what I say is true. He knows that if this side had not supported the Bill last session it would never have been carried, and he knows farther that if the same thing does not occur this session the Government will find it impossible to carry the measure through. We are in this position that while there are members on the Ministerial side who are opposed to the Government on this proposal, when it comes to a question of introducing reactionary legislation of a character such as the amending Arbitration Bill, the Electoral Bill, and the Police Offences Bill—measures which are aimed practically at members of the Labour Party and the democratic constituencies of this country—those same members will give their support to the reactionary principles against the members of the Opposition. It is too much to ask of any party that because of their support and their continued adhesion to the principle of land values taxation, they should first assist the Government to carry the Bill against their own supporters, and then

have to witness Ministerial members opposed to land values taxation helping the Government to carry reactionary legislation against our interests and those of the great mass of people in this community. I have also to refer to what can only be termed the "wobblesome" attitude of members of the Government in regard to this measure. In the first instance there was their refusal last session to accept the Bill without exemptions when they could have had it, and then there was the manner in which they avoided the holding of a special session last February. They have not given to the people of the State, or at least the supporters of land values taxation, anything like full evidence of their sincerity in this matter. As farther evidence of that, I have only to point to the class of advocate they bring forward as carrying the banner in support of land values taxation. We have it in evidence in the recent campaign for the East Province. I need only refer to the election of 1905, in which we had a candidate who was a consistent advocate of land values taxation. We found then that the Honorary Minister was its opponent, and that he fought the contest and won it against the other candidate—won it in opposition to land values taxation. Next he rose in this House and said that while he was still opposed to land values taxation, yet as Honorary Minister and a member of the Cabinet, he felt compelled to vote for it. Another gentleman, who assisted the Honorary Minister at that time in opposing the candidate pledged to land values taxation, has since come forward, also supported by the Government, as a so-called supporter of land values taxation. Let me read some of his views on this very question, to show the doubtful expedients to which the Government have to resort in their alleged efforts to carry this measure and place it on the statute-book. We have had this candidate, whom the Government supported at the recent election but a short time ago, using the following words:—

"The proposed tax in an old-established country is perfectly legitimate, but in a new one like our own where

new settlers are being attracted by the existing liberal conditions, it can only result in a severe check to the continued rapid settlement now going on, and which we are all anxious to see continued. . . . Whichever way it is looked at, calm reflection will show that the proposal is inopportune and inexpedient, and altogether an unwise policy for this new country to adopt. We returned Mr. Mitchell pledged to oppose the policy of the Labour Party, one of its planks being land taxation. Because of his honorary position he now, while avowing his hostility to the Bill, as publicly avows his intention of supporting it, and I can only say that if such actions be common sense, I want none of it. . . . Had this action been that of the Labour Party, we might have borne it; but coming from our own familiar friend, in whom we trusted—for him to have lifted up his heel against us is more than we should be called upon to bear in silence. He spoke as a very small landowner, and as one who personally would be very little affected by the tax."

As a small landowner, with no interest at all in the question; merely out of solicitude for the people of the State! Then a short time afterwards he gave utterance to the following words:—

"The large landowners are mistaken in opposing the tax so bitterly. They oppose their own interests and yours. Agricultural railways mean increased population, increased value to all lands, increased trade to towns; increased life in all our workshops, more work for the toiler, and general prosperity to the State. Electors, do not be deceived. I have thought it all out. Trust me, and we shall win now as we did in the old days. Remember also I am a large landholder, a large owner of town and city property, a farmer, and a worker all my life. In every walk, your interests are my interests." Then, on the Friday night prior to the election, when speaking at Newcastle, where there was a large majority of those entitled to vote opposed to the tax, the same gentleman was asked to declare his

views in a definite manner on the question. When asked to pledge himself whether he was or was not a supporter of the land tax, he declined to answer.

The Attorney General: Was the hon. member present?

Mr. BATH: No; I am quoting from the report published in the newspaper which was supporting him in the election, the *West Australian*. He declined to answer the question, saying that the electors might trust him. I say that any candidate who goes before a constituency on a question like this and is not prepared to trust the electors beforehand with his views on the question, has no right to ask the electors to trust him, and has no right to expect their votes on election day.

The Minister for Works: I was present on the occasion. You know Mr. Throssell's infirmity. On many occasions during the campaign he made distinct statements of his attitude on this question.

Mr. BATH: It was unfortunate for him that his previous attitude, right up to a few weeks of that campaign, had given reason for the interpretation put on his statements; and whatever may be his infirmity, there was every justification for the interpretation placed by the newspapers on his utterances. If the Minister for Works can reconcile the utterances and the attitude, I will leave it to him to do so when addressing himself to the subject in this House. I may say that the attitude of this party (Labour), so far as this measure is concerned, will be the same as that taken in the last session. We intend to make every effort to remove those iniquities in the Bill which have been so frequently referred to in condemnatory terms by the Attorney General. If we wanted arguments against the Bill, we have only to look up the speeches made by that hon. member when seeking election, to furnish ourselves with a whole arsenal of weapons with which to combat the land tax proposals. I wish however to say this, in view of the unsatisfactory attitude taken by members on the Ministerial side, that if we are unable to secure the elimination of these mutilations of the measure, it will then

be time to decide what our attitude shall be on the third reading of the Bill—[*Mr. Taylor*: Why not on the second reading?—and leave it to the supporters of the Government on the Ministerial side of the House, on this very vital portion of their programme (according to themselves), to decide whether the Bill shall be passed or not.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): I have but few words to say on this measure, and I want to be as emphatic as possible. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that the Government have solely to depend on this (Opposition) side of the House to carry this important plank in their policy. In view of legislation that the Government have already brought down, legislation which will have a detrimental effect on those people whom I and other members on this side represent, I urge members on the Opposition side to consult the interests of their constituents; and I believe that if they do that, they will move that the Bill be read this day six months. The Government believe that the Labour Party dare not oppose this measure, because land values taxation is one of the foremost planks of the party's platform—[*Member*: Not with exemptions]—but the Labour Party advocate the taxation of unimproved values taxation; not a hybrid measure of this character. Perhaps the Government will say that the Labour Party should accept half a loaf as being better than no bread; but when it is found that the half-loaf is composed largely of plaster-of-paris or something equally injurious to the human system, it is necessary for us to resent the half-loaf and say we will have a whole loaf of pure bread or none. What is the position? The Government are unable to carry this measure, to carry their own policy, through this House without the support of this side of the House. It is well known that the supporters of the Government will oppose this measure in any form or phase. Hence I maintain we on this side are not justified in helping the Government over a stile with their land taxation proposals, which have no relation at all to the land

taxation proposals we desire to see introduced. We are not justified in helping them to carry this measure in the very teeth, I may say, of a majority of their own supporters when we know that, having done so, when the legislation comes down that affects the people of this State—legislation which has already been introduced by the Government in another place, the Arbitration Bill which affects the workers of this country in a larger degree than the measure now under review—then those supporters of the Government against whom we have helped the Government to carry this foremost plank of their policy will join forces with the Government and sandbag us with legislation which we feel is aimed against the people we represent. I want to ask members on this side of the House, and I want the workers of this country to be asked, whether we are justified in doing that. I say we are not. The Minister for Mines, when speaking last Wednesday night in connection with the proposed select committee to inquire into the pastoral industry of this country, said "We as a Government have a majority, and we should use that majority in this House to carry our proposals and we are going to do so." Then let the Government use their majority to carry the policy they have enunciated to the country. I do not want to be misrepresented in this statement: I want it to be clearly known to the people of this country the attitude I have adopted this afternoon. I cannot find any justification, as a member of the Opposition and as a Labour man, for helping the Government to carry the first plank of their platform and policy in the teeth of their own supporters, and to afterwards use those supporters to, as I said before, brutally ill-treat the workers of this country by means of legislation they have already brought into another place. This side of the House should oppose the second reading of this Bill, and stump the country on it; and if it be necessary for the Government to go to the country, necessary that the Government should resign, let it be so, and let us fight the question on platforms in the various constituencies of Western Australia. [*Mr. Troy*: The

sooner the better.] The sooner the better, I am reminded by the member for Mt. Magnet. It would be the very best thing for the country to permit the people to have another say as to who shall bring down a land tax. The Government have no mandate for land taxation from the people they represent. I should like to ask members representing Wellington, Katanning, Gascoyne, Murray, Swan, Kimberley, Beverley, York, Greenough, not forgetting Albany, what sort of a chance they would have on a platform in their constituencies supporting a Government proposal to bring down a land tax. [*Ministerial Member* : We are not going to support them in that.] They would have the same chance of support as they had when the Government tried last session to cripple free education. I hope I will not be misunderstood. This Bill is nothing like the principle enunciated in the Labour Party's platform as a land tax. So far as I am concerned, I am prepared to oppose this hybrid form of land taxation, and to face the electors of Mt. Margaret and justify such action ; and I am perfectly satisfied that they will recognise the justification I have in compelling the Government to carry their own policy. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out the attitude of the hon. gentleman who was successful in the East Province ; but what could we expect ? [*Mr. Bath* : A small large landholder.] Yes, a small large landholder ; a gentleman who would not trust his electors, but asked his electors to trust him. It has been argued by the Attorney General on platforms in the East Province that the Labour Party were not justified in sending a man against this reputable land-taxer, the Hon. G. Throssell. I know how much that gentleman really believes in land taxation. The Attorney General, the Minister for Works and the Minister for Mines argued that in the best interests of the East Province the electors should return the Government candidate. These gentlemen were sorry it was not a clean-cut issue between the non-taxer, Mr. Wilding, and the land-taxer, Hon. G. Throssell ; and they would have known

exactly where they were. The Government stumped the country with an old veteran politician, a man who was seeking the suffrages of the people for election to a non-party Chamber. The Government sent their Ministers to stump the country. I am pleased that the only Minister they dared send to Northam was the Attorney General, who had always advocated land taxation ; he was sent, I presume, on account of his clean record in regard to this matter. The Attorney General and the Minister for Works are the only two Ministers who have advocated land taxation in any form. The Government wanted a clean-cut issue in the East Province, but I maintain that the contest has not decided whether the East Province really supports the land taxation as brought down by the Government, in view of the telegram that was read from the Minister for Railways, a telegram over which the adjournment of this House should have been moved, setting forth that the Government were prepared to reduce freights, and that what they should save on the railways would be to the tune of £50,000. [*Mr. Collier* : Yet they have a provision in the new Electoral Bill against bribery.] If that is what is called a clean-cut issue, if it is called contesting elections on political lines when the Honorary Minister received a telegram from the Minister for Railways and read it at an important election meeting, a telegram apologising for the absence of the Minister and his inability to address the intellectual electors at Northam, but doing the next best thing, stating that he was securing £50,000 by reduced freights—if that be conducting campaigns on political lines I do not know ; but it is quite in keeping with the way in which the Governments with which the Minister for Mines has been associated for the last six or seven years have acted. We well remember how the adjournment of the House was moved over the North Fremantle election, and how it was proved that bribes were offered to the electors by the then Minister for Works, Mr. Rason. [*Mr. Angwin* : And are not carried out yet.] They were successful in returning the Government nominee—[*Mr. Bolton* : By six

votes]—but the public works promised—I do not know what they were to cost, but it was, “If you return this man we will do this work”—have not been carried out. The same thing will apply to Northam. [Mr. Butcher: It is to be hoped not.] There is no danger of its being done; the telegram has served its purpose. The Treasurer said:—

“We must endeavour by moderate taxation, combined with just and fair economy in the public departments, more especially I think in our Railway Department, so to adjust our finances that we shall be able to at least balance the year’s expenditure.”

I believe they tried to balance the electors of Northam with this £50,000. It is too much to give for 16 votes; I think the Minister for Mines believes that himself. [Mr. Underwood: It is only on credit.] It is the duty of the members of the party with which I am associated to seriously consider whether they are going to support this important portion of the Government’s policy, and carry it in the teeth of the Government’s supporters, and then allow themselves to be sandbagged on the Arbitration Bill and on the Electoral Bill, and on other legislation affecting the people of this country. I hope members of this party will not allow themselves to be used; I will not. The Leader of this party has said, if we cannot carry in this measure all we consider is essential, all we are sent to this House to bring about, that if we cannot reach that during the Committee stages we will, on the third reading, consider our position. For myself, I believe it is a waste of time to discuss the Bill to that extent unless we are assured that the measure will be as we desire it. Why should we not carry it as we desire it? Why should we carry a hybrid thing, something we cannot recognise as portion of our policy? We are not justified in doing that. No Opposition is justified in carrying a portion of a Government’s policy in view of what I have already said is to follow. I hope the Opposition will consult the best interests of their constituencies, and use their votes in this House as I have indicated; that

is, unless this measure is the measure such as we desire it according to our platform, we will allow the Government to carry it themselves, and give to the majority the opportunity of throwing it out; and then the Government may have to go to the country with it. There is no rebuff the Government can get from this side of the House they will deem sufficiently important to cause them to consider their position. It is up to the Opposition to give the Government the opportunity—in view of the attitude of the Government last session, in view of their promise of a session in February to consider this important matter, which promise was not fulfilled; there was a caucus meeting of Government supporters who opposed the Bill, and they reckoned, I suppose, that it was as well to keep it away from the House as long as possible; and the decision was agreed to by the Ministers—and I hope the Government will have the opportunity, as every Government should have, of carrying their own legislation with their own party, and not depending on the Opposition to place on the statute book something which the Opposition do not want in its present form. We want the land taxation we are sent here to place on the statute book, and I trust that we will test the strength of the Government, and not alone their strength but their solidity; we will see at once, if the attitude I have indicated is adopted on this side of the House, how solid the Government are, what a happy family they are, how they will pull together, how they will unite to fight the common enemy—in this instance the electors whom they will have to face if the measure is not carried. Let the Government do what any respectable Government would do, appeal to the country on the question and get a mandate from the electors as I have. My mandate is to support land taxation, but not in the form the Government have brought down. I am not going to do it in view of what I know is following in the shape of two measures which will have a damning effect on the workers of this State.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): It is refreshing to be able

to find out from the hon. member's hysterics that now there is something placed before us of a tangible nature in regard to the policy which it is the intention of those sitting on the opposite side of the House to adopt. The Leader of the Opposition gave us a hint of what those sitting opposite were prepared to consider; he told us they would have to consider their position on the third reading of the Bill, and that it was probable something very peculiar might eventuate in reference to the Land Tax Assessment Bill we have before the House. I am quite prepared to say that I want no assistance from them in regard to this measure, and I feel confident of what the result will be. We are quite satisfied we can carry our Bill. I would like to be able to carry it without any assistance from those sitting opposite. Hon. members were told that we declined the Opposition's offers of assistance, that we wanted it not. [*Mr. Bath*: You worried about it enough.] I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. member that we are able to carry our measure without the assistance of the Opposition. How useless was it last session for the Whip to go to the other side of the House and expect any members there, allied to the Labour party, to vote other than as a party. In a few instances some members opposite do vote on this side, but we rarely expect it. In regard to this measure I hope we will be able to carry it and let those who sit opposite publicly declare that, because this is a hybrid measure, or because they are opposed to other legislation we are going to bring forward, they are not going to give us any support in regard to it. Just imagine the member for Mt. Margaret coming here and talking about land taxation and the hybrid legislation we are bringing in. Let me carry the hon. member's memory back to the time when he was a Minister, and to the Bill his Ministry suggested bringing before the House. Was there in it any land taxation like that in this Bill? No; it was simply a Bill to tax unimproved lands with very large exemptions. [*Mr. Gordon*: Exemptions to £4,000.] The hon. member opposite was a party to

that, and now has the impertinence to call this a hybrid measure, which simply gives exemptions to the small men.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not use the word "impertinence."

The *MINISTER FOR MINES*: I withdraw.

Mr. Bath: The hon. member should read the Attorney General's speeches.

The *MINISTER FOR MINES*: The hon. member always likes to hark back to these abstract theories. The member for Mt. Margaret had something to say in reference to a telegram sent by the Agricultural Department at my dictation to the Honorary Minister. [*Mr. T. L. Brown*: Was it a bogus telegram?] No; it was not sent to Geraldton this time. The then Minister for Agriculture wished to know what economies were to be effected for this year in the Railway Department, and I told him of reductions we expected to make to the extent of £50,000; but feeling assured that the Minister wanted that information for the purpose of making a public speech, I wished to state emphatically that any economies we could make in our railways should not be utilised by the Treasurer for the purpose of meeting the deficit, but that if we could effect economies the producer should have the advantage of them.

Mr. Bath: And the Treasurer himself said in his speech on the Land Tax Assessment Bill that the amount saved was to be used to reduce the deficit.

The *MINISTER*: In the administration, I am trying to effect economies. [*Mr. Taylor*: For electioneering purposes.] The hon. member knows a lot about electioneering dodges, and yet comes to us as a little angel. I do not need to go to the other side, anyhow— [*Mr. Taylor*: For any points]—to learn political morality. I have seen quite enough of their morality, and I could probably give a few instances if I desired. [*Mr. Taylor*: Trot them out.] I wish to make an explanation as to the telegram I dictated to the Agricultural Department to be sent to the Minister for Agriculture. [*Mr. Taylor*: Was it signed by you?] It is absurd to have these continuous interruptions. The hon. member

might have the courtesy to allow others to speak. When he was speaking no one interrupted him. I do not mind an occasional interruption, but I wish members would allow me some little latitude. I wished to impress upon the Minister for Agriculture the fact that when we were making these economies the advantage of them should be given to the producer. It was not only when sending that wire that I advocated this policy. Time after time I have always argued we should try to run our railways so as to assist the producer more effectually than we have assisted him in the past. And there is no doubt our railways have been used too much for producing revenue, and too little for the assistance of those who are helping to build up the country. I do not know whether I have at hand some figures recently compiled to show the results of railway administration in the various States. We have heard the Queensland railways lauded considerably; but I should like to point out that whereas in Western Australia during the past ten years the railways, after paying working expenses and interest on the total capital outlay for those railways, have returned to the State over £800,000, the Queensland railways, if charged with working expenses and interest on their capital cost, would show a loss of over £3,000,000. South Australia is an exception; and her railways, during the whole of that ten years, would show a profit of only about £86,000; while in every one of the other States there have been exceedingly large losses, except in Western Australia, which shows a profit, after paying working expenses and interest on capital cost, of over £800,000. I do not think our railways should be utilised, to the same extent as in the past, to provide revenue for carrying on the State. I hold that my telegram was quite justified. It embodied the policy which the Government were initiating. I sent that telegram to a district which was in a great measure opposed to the land tax; and I wished the people of the district to understand that the benefit of these economies, if we could make them, should be given to

the producer, rather than that we should have to abandon our land tax proposals, which might be anticipated if we showed greater profits.

Mr. Bath: Your wire could not have been discussed in Cabinet.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The question of a reduction of railway rates has always been under consideration; and more especially if we can exercise economies, but even if we cannot, we are desirous of reducing the freights, particularly on grain and mining timber. These are two items which I was exceedingly anxious to reduce; and if we could effect the anticipated economies, it was my intention to recommend the Cabinet to make those reductions so as to assist the producer. That telegram embodied a definite portion of the railway policy, and the message it contained was quite justified. Moreover, it was emphatic in saying that we were desirous of insisting on the policy of land taxation. I should like to compare the Government policy with that of the Opposition. Knowing that at the election in question one candidate opposed our land tax scheme while another supported it, yet we find the Labour party bringing out a third candidate; and they could have had no other object than to split the vote and enable the opponent of our proposals to be elected. The chance of the third candidate's securing the seat was hopeless, and there can have been only one object—to try to embarrass the Government by getting a member returned to the Legislative Council with a view to defeating our land tax measure. At all events, I am as fully justified in making that assumption, and far more fully justified, than are members opposite in many of the assumptions they have made here to-night. The action of members opposite shows clearly to the public how earnest the Labour party are in assisting the Government to carry the land tax. The member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) pointed to two members of the Ministry as the only two who had urged the imposition of a land tax. Having followed me all over the country on many occasions, in his endeavour to defeat me at the polls, he must know how earnestly

I espoused throughout the goldfields the cause of land taxation.

Mr. Scaddan : At the last election you advocated a land tax, and in the same speech said it was not necessary.

The MINISTER : The hon. member is mistaken.

Mr. Scaddan : I read you the extract last session.

The MINISTER : The hon. member has made many statements that have not been justified. [Several interjections by Labour members.] This is the usual "win, tie, or wrangle" policy with which I have been confronted in my election campaigns, and I regret to find the same policy pursued in the House. Anyhow, I am pleased that the member for Mt. Margaret has made to-night the statement that the Government are not in their land tax proposals to look for any support from him or those who sit with him. If we cannot carry our measures with the assistance of our own supporters, perhaps it will be better for us to give way to others who will bring in some other policy, a policy which possibly may not be the policy of the hon. member, but of people who may be less desirous of giving the country what the hon. member advocates but does not try to carry into effect. However, that is a problem of the future. I only wish to express the pleasure I feel at the statement made that in respect of this measure we shall receive no assistance from the Opposition.

Mr. T. WALKER (Kanowna) : I shall not detain the House long. I should have liked to hear some of those on the Government side who last year were strong in their protest against the Government measure, but who seem to have been cowed in some manner—I do not say that offensively—by the speech of the Minister for Mines. The apparently earnest attitude of the Minister is quite a new feature in the Government. When we consider that this Bill has for nearly twelve months been dangling before the people, it is refreshing to perceive the spirit and pluck exhibited to-night in the Minister's utterances. If that earnestness is real, and if the measure is so needful as we are given to understand, why all

the dilatory tactics ever since the measure was defeated last session? Why have we had this playing fast and loose with the measure? Why have we one moment a promise of this measure put into the mouth of His Excellency himself, with almost a tone of defiance to another branch of the Legislature? Why had we the statement in His Excellency's Speech when proroguing Parliament in December last that there must be a meeting of Parliament in February to consider this measure because of its urgency? We are now in the closing months of the year, and only now are we discussing the measure, and with so lackadaisical a spirit, with such a want of real public interest in the measure, that all the landed magnates who support the Government are sitting silent. [*Mr. Gordon* : Am I included among the landed magnates?] I do not know the hon. member as a magnate of any sort. They are silent now; waiting for what? To see how the cat jumps? I wish to know whether this Bill is earnestly intended to be a taxing measure to adjust our finances, or whether the Government are not utterly regardless of the financial position of the State. The policy pursued makes me think the Government do not care one jot about finance, so long as they continue in office. I have read the telegram the Minister for Mines sent during a recent fight for an Upper House seat—a fight which should never have been entered into in a party spirit, seeing that the Upper House is not a party House, that it has no "sides," so to speak; yet the Government actually went out of their way to provoke the fight, and the remark applies particularly to the Minister for Mines. I do not know whether the telegram he sent was read to the House, but it was worded as follows: "We shall save £50,000 on railways, but it will be applied to the reduction of freights on produce. No intention to make the railways carry the baby." Now the Minister tried to explain it in this form, that some request had been made to him, so I understand it, that he would state the policy of the Government with regard to the railways, and he stated it in this telegram. He stated the policy of the Government, and

only with a view of informing the benighted people of Northam what the policy of the Government was; perhaps to serve just that, to let the people know. [Mr. Angwin interjected.] It had none, it was one of those customary practices indulged in by the Government at every by-election since the House met, what looks uncommonly like trying to get the electors to vote for their particular candidate, and we shall find the same thing very shortly when Mr. Simpson is running for West Perth; they will do the same thing by some definite promise out of the public purse. They are bringing forward a paltry land taxation, and when I say paltry I say it because it deserts all the principles of land taxation. It is a Bill following a zig-zag fashion because this supporter and that supporter does not like the land tax, and when the result gets into the Treasury it is a mere flea bite in comparison with the interests of the State. In spite of having to raise this taxation, and for which this Bill is necessary, £50,000, nearly the whole of the amount expected to be obtained from the land tax, is promised to all those who will support Mr. Throssell—the producers in the Northam district. That is what it was for; £50,000 can be thrown away, but the baby, that is to say our indebtedness, the State's financial difficulties, the Minister for Railways would not have anything to do with; he is not going to nurse the baby, but any other Minister can.

Mr. Bath: The Treasurer says he is going to use the money to reduce the deficit.

Mr. WALKER: We have it stated, when an election is proceeding for the Upper House, that £50,000 which the Minister says can be saved on the railways will not be utilised, not one iota of it, to save the general mass of the people from taxation, but it will be used purely in the interests of the producer, the class of people that the candidate is seeking to represent. The Treasurer has said, in the speech which he delivered recently in the House on the Bill—

"We must endeavour, by moderate taxation combined with just and fair economy in the public departments, more especially I think in our Rail-

way Department, so to adjust our finances that we shall be able at least to balance the year's expenditure."

Contrast his nursing even "the baby" by means of the railways, with the Minister for Railway's statement that none of the £50,000 will go towards nursing the baby.

The Minister for Mines: My idea was to make it emphatic that we should have a land tax, and that the railways should not be used as they have been in the past in despoiling the producers; that if we made economies the producer would get the advantage of them.

Mr. WALKER: Does not the State get advantage of every economy in every department? What are Ministers doing? Seeking to get economies for a particular class or to lighten the burden of the whole of the people? That is what should be done, but the telegram cannot be read so. It is a distinct promise to a certain class of people, who were to vote for one man seeking election to the Council, there can be no doubt about that. If the Minister can economise in one direction and reduce in another with the railways what urgency is there for the land tax? If the Government can give £50,000 to the producer, why get £60,000 from the land tax? why not save the people from the imposition of the land tax? My argument is this: if you can afford to throw away £50,000 to benefit one class of the community you have no right to replace the £50,000 you give to them by a specific tax on all the rest of the people. That is the position. I want fair administration in these matters. I wish to say that a land tax, when it is a land tax, I am in favour of, but I do not like to help the Government in any form to pass a mongrel measure. I do not care about assisting the Government to get whatever credit there may be in land taxation whilst they do not give land taxation. They apply no principle, there is no principle whatever in their Bill, it is just as elastic as you choose to make it, to suit every particular class of land holder, so that there will not be a cry out here and cry out there. And it seems to me, and I am bound to say it, that the elasticity of the Bill is best

shown when it suits some of the Government influential supporters. On the general body of ratepayers the Bill will perhaps fall with equal incidence, but those who have the right to the burden, who are the biggest landowners and have the largest estates in the country, they are not dealt with harshly, and that is the point on which I emphatically make my objection.

The Attorney General: What clause do you refer to?

Mr. WALKER: I am speaking now of the exemptions. There are exemptions that benefit the Government side of the House, that benefit my friend the member for Katanning, and my friend may know what I know, that he is not particularly in favour of land taxation at all, and so far as can be done the Government are desirous of considering that class in the community.

Mr. Foulkes: Tell us how the exemptions will affect the large landowners.

Mr. WALKER: I am speaking generally. The Minister says, with a very defiant attitude, that he is glad to hear the Opposition are taking this stand. There has been some intimation thrown out by the Leader of the Opposition and by the member for Mount Margaret, that this (Labour) party may have to seriously consider whether we are justified in helping to foist on the country a measure that it will be its first duty, if ever this (Labour) side gets into power, to correct and undo. It is far better when you are doing work to do it well and properly so that there need be no tinkering afterwards, than to get a tinkered thing in existence that satisfies nobody and does not affect what is aimed at, and which will be one of the first things to undo before the right thing can be done in the future.

Mr. Gordon: If you cannot build a mansion live out in the wet.

Mr. WALKER: Before you build a dabb hut better start to build a proper house in the beginning, and if you cannot manage to do that at once wait until you can afford it. The only thing that will prevent land taxation being put on the statute book is the existence of that (Government) party, the party of com-

promise, the party that is pleasing everybody, giving supporters everything they ask for, even promising £50,000 to voters when it suits their purpose. That is the reason we cannot get the measure the public desire, for the public are in favour of a land tax, they do not want this measure. Are we justified in helping the Government to get this measure? The Minister for Railways says we can do without it. That is what we would like them to do. Let them take the responsibility of voting for the measure.

Mr. Gordon: You take the responsibility of voting against it.

Mr. WALKER: I am satisfied the Labour Party are quite willing to take the responsibility for the course we take; it is not a fitful one or one taken for party purposes; whatever action is taken will be with regard to duty, with regard to faithful promises to electors, with due regard, indeed, to what is incumbent on us in representing principles. We will take all the responsibility for that, and if we fall in such circumstances we shall fall honourably. But the Minister is absolutely in this instance acting the part of the bravado; we have got plenty to do without you. I like the Ministry acting like that. Let us see what kind of conduct the Minister promises to get plenty behind him. It is not by an appeal to honour or conscience but on an appeal to the Whip, that appeals to members' selfishness, the raising of their fears. If they do not vote as the Minister for Railways desires they will be put in a hole, they will have to meet their masters and they are afraid of that; and the Minister's boast to-night is defiance; it is nothing else than his consciousness that he can rely on the fears of supporters. That is where the strength of the Government lies, not on their principles, there are none in the Bill, it is abortive; they try to snatch the vote of this (Labour) side of the House, for they have known all along this is one of the strongest planks of the platform of this side of the House. How did this Land Bill become part of the Government programme?

Mr. Gordon: The £4,000 exemption, do not forget that.

Mr. WALKER: How did this become part of the Government programme? The hon. member knows that he resigned from the whipship about the time that this became a prominent part of the Government programme. It became a prominent part about the time when the Minister for Railways was met up somewhere in the bush, going from Nullagine somewhere. It was at the time when the Minister was trying to save his skin, when he did not know whether he would be included in the Cabinet or not; when every Minister wanted to be Premier, when there were bitter, heart-breaking sorrows. If the Minister for Works and the Attorney General tell us the truth they can testify that this measure was imposed on the Government. It was one part of the conditions of the new combination, it was put forward as a *sine qua non* of the piece. The Minister for Railways in order to win votes of the democrats at Menzies, told them that he was in favour of the measure, and in the same breath he told them that it was not necessary and that he would come to the House with the statement that it was not necessary.

The Minister for Mines: How long ago?

Mr. WALKER: Why how long ago? Is it not so? Has the hon. member told us that the necessity has been brought on him by gradual conversion? Why it was the most sudden conversion in the world, it occurred in a railway carriage between Guildford and here. It was most sudden. That is how the member got converted. He never wanted it. No, but there were two members of the Cabinet who joined on these terms. The Attorney General was one and the Minister for Works the other.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member is incorrect, but it does not matter.

Mr. WALKER: No, it does not matter, he says; but I say it does matter. I may be incorrect on some things. I am not incorrect on this, that it was the suggestion of the Attorney General and the Minister, and this of course is to their credit, that this should be part of the new programme starting from the date

of the Moore Government. I have some recollection that the Attorney General boasted at Kalgoorlie, I do not mean ostentatiously, but in the manner a man does when he feels proud of having done something great and good, that he had been instrumental in getting these democratic principles into the programme of the Government. [Mr. Bath: Then he went back on them.] How could the Attorney General keep in with the Ministry without becoming demoralised? After the experience of the Minister for Railways, and the nursing of the baby at Northam, one can expect anything from the Ministry. The question of land taxation was forced upon the Government as one of the terms of compromise when the Moore Government had its inception. That is the position. It is on that account that we have such lukewarmness on the part of some members of the Cabinet towards the measure. It is pre-eminently a financial measure, it is a taxation measure, and yet although we had a promise that this measure would be discussed in February last, where was at that time the man in charge of it? What interest did he show in the measure, what love did he exhibit towards it, and what extra zeal did he display in bringing it to fruition? Notice his conduct in the House last session. Was it that of an enthusiast, a man who had pledged his existence on its success, a man who was fighting a hard cause against adversity, and had his whole soul in it? No, it was the case of a man who was doing the work practically mechanically, carrying out a duty which had to be done to please the rest of the Cabinet, part of a task imposed on him which he carried out reluctantly, but with as good a grace as he could summon in the trying circumstances of the case. That is the attitude he assumed last session, and his attitude still is that of a reluctant man. There was no fire, no zeal, no zest in the introduction of the measure in the House, and I do not know that I am doing him an injustice when I say that this measure is most distasteful to him. He may try and make men believe he is sincere in bringing it forward, and that it is necessary in the public in-

terests for the sake of taxation ; but I am firmly of conviction that he would much prefer to raise taxes in some other way which would less touch his particular friends. The whole attitude of the Government, with the exception of one or two members, has been that of playing with this important measure, of deferring and of putting off the evil day, and of endeavouring to make the Bill of such a kind that it would meet every branch of their supporters. [*The Minister for Mines* : The Treasurer is away ill to-night, or he would have been here.] I am sorry to hear that the Treasurer is ill ; but we will take the case of the Honorary Minister. During the debate last session, I read a speech which he had made, and it is a pity I have not hunted it up on this occasion, as it would apply equally now as then. It was delivered at Northam when the Honorary Minister was seeking election. At that time he was opposed to a land tax ; at that time the land tax was a most iniquitous measure as far as the member for Northam was concerned, and there was not a bigger scarecrow in politics than that to him. He would oppose it tooth and nail before he would allow it to come into existence. [*Mr. Bath* : He had Mr. Throssell to help him then.] Yes, and that gentleman has gone back on it, and has obtained a seat in the Upper House. What is the attitude now of the Honorary Minister ? Has he become a warm advocate of this Bill, has he become a champion of the principle of land taxation ; is he not now just as bitter against this tax as he was before ? What are we to think when we know these facts ? They are not only uttered here but are known to all the public. The Ministry is composed of men who hate this measure, their instincts are against it, their past conduct and advocacy are diametrically opposed to the course the Government are taking. When the Bill is introduced, the Minister introducing it does so in a half-hearted manner. The champion of the Bill to-night was the Minister for Railways, and what championship of it was it ? If a member required convincing that the Bill was necessary what did he say to

justify the wavering course which the measure has taken. Scarcely a member of the Cabinet believes in the Bill. It is a measure which the Ministry have a distaste for, but they brought it in because they were forced to. It was a baby placed in their arms which they had to nurse when the Attorney General and the Minister for Works came in their midst. Why, I would ask the Attorney General and the Minister for Works, did they take up this attitude ? It was because they were afraid of the progress and popularity of this side of the House. They knew this side could not sit on that side without bringing in a measure purely and simply for a land tax based upon proper principles. [*The Attorney General* : Did you see the draft of the Daglish Government's measure ?] I am not speaking of the Daglish Government but the Labour Government.

The Attorney General : Was not that a Labour Government ?

Mr. Troy : What was your policy at the last general elections ?

Mr. WALKER : Here is the secret of it. The Attorney General has been reading the draft Bill of the Daglish Government, and as a consequence he thought he could go one better, as he always does as evidenced in the Police Offences Bill. He reads another person's Bills and then goes one better. That is the whole secret. The Bill was introduced owing to the fire and zeal of this side of the House. I may be unjust in saying that neither of them had faith in the principle ; but it was a good move to get that measure introduced by the present Government as it would keep back the cry of the general public for the realisation of their desire to place a Government of Labour members in power. This is what I object to. The Government are not capable of putting in a sound Land Tax Bill. I am not referring to their intellectual capacity, but to the fix in which they are in, the number of discordant elements on their side of the House, the supporters to whom they have to give way here and there, and the following of the general policy of trying to continue in office by giving something to everybody. They

are in such a fix that they should be the last body to be entrusted with a Land Tax Bill. They have too many interests to pacify, too many wolves following up on their heels, they cannot help themselves, consequently their measure is liable to all the suspicion one may choose to throw on it. There is the danger of allowing the Government to put on the statutes a Bill of a weak, emasculated kind, and the trouble with regard to the legislation in the past has often been that Bills are passed in such a form in the first instance that there is nothing to be done in the future but to tinker with them and to try and put them in some sort of decent shape; this would be quite unnecessary were there to be good Bills from their foundation. It is better to have no Bill at all than a bad one which will never give satisfaction, and which will cause great expense and take up the time of the country for years in tinkering with it and trying to put it into proper shape. Let there be a fearless and frank opposition to this measure from the outset. By listening to farther speeches by members of the Government I hope to learn what course the Government intend to pursue. Are they going to stand to their guns or not? We are entitled to ask the Government what they intend. We know that last session they were twice beaten, they tried to kow-tow to the Upper House as if they had been Mongolians. There was bowing and scraping. We were all witnesses to the scene when we were asked not to breathe a word lest we should stir up the Upper House. It was pointed out that the body were in an irritable mood, and that nothing should be done to disturb them. All the Government did was to suggest that we should kindly ask the Upper House to meet us over a cup of tea; that was the attitude the Government then assumed. What better chances have they now? It was on that score that they dared not to meet in February or in May, and that members did not come together until the latter half of this year. I ask whether the position is any better now in the Upper Chamber. True by making promises to electors of £50,000 they have managed to get in a supporter,

who may, without any question of honour, disappoint them when the hour comes. We have seen the movement of the wind upon the outspread feathers of an hon. member of another Chamber in days gone by. [Mr. Scaddan: We do not like this sudden conversion.] The curse of these times with politicians is that they change right-about-turn in the course of a few months, with the promise of place or position, or some sort of assistance to their electors. It is the curse of the country that we have no politicians with backbone to stand to a principle and to follow it for all time. We have now this sudden conversion by Mr. Throssell. He is the reed they are depending upon in the Upper House, and if he does not vote for them what will the Government do. Supposing this House carries the measure and a Government majority is whipped up to bring into subjugation every conscience on that side of the Speaker and the measure reaches the other Chamber, have the Government the slightest hope that it will be treated differently from what it was last session? They have not been able to reach members of that Chamber as they can members of this House. Let us know what we are doing. Are they playing with the question? If we are convinced that this measure will reach the other Chamber only to be kicked out, let us know that, so that we can be conscientious in the fight we will put up. Are the Government prepared to take any legitimate step in the matter?

At 6.15, the Speaker left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. WALKER (continuing): I was impressing on the Government the necessity for taking the House into their confidence, and telling us frankly what they intend to do supposing the Bill after leaving this Chamber meets in another place with a defeat similar to that of last year. So far as I can see, the Bill has not even so good a chance as it had last year. It is well known that a recognised supporter of the Bill was defeated in the election for the North Province, for which Mr Pennefather, a

strong opponent of the measure, was returned to another place. That is one supporter less for the measure and one extra against it in the Upper Chamber; and his return being an indication of the opinion of the people, the Government may take it that their policy has at least in the North-West been condemned. And in the recent election for the same House, how near was the condemnation. Let us compare the number of those who voted for the Government supporter and those who voted for the opponent of the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: Do you add to the latter the votes that Mr. Watts obtained?

Mr. WALKER: Yes. Every member who voted for Mr. Watts was a voter for the Labour party, and the policy of the Labour party is a land tax without exemptions. [*Mr. Taylor:* Not this Bill.] Not the Bill, but a land tax without exemptions; therefore all the votes for Mr. Watts were votes against the Bill in its present form. And when we consider, too, that in order to return Mr. Throssell by a bare majority there had to be from the Government a promise of £50,000 to producers to turn the tide—[*The Minister for Mines:* That is too stale.] Not too stale at all. On the contrary, it is one of those things which should arouse the strongest protest from every honourable-minded man in the country that the Government should come forward at such a time as that with such a promise. [*Mr. Bath:* The same as at the Fremantle election.] The same at every election; the same old tactics. If the constant practice of these ignoble tactics makes them stale, I will admit they are stale; but they are fresh offences whenever they occur. But let me say that this offence, old or new, was the offence that won Mr. Throssell his election. The Government may take it the public in the East Province voted against the Bill in its present form; and, knowing that, can we think the Bill is likely to receive a kindly reception in the Upper Chamber? And if not—if it be again rejected—have not we in this House a right to know what are the intentions of the Government consequent

thereupon? Will the Government then sit quietly by and have another February session next year? Will they submit constantly to defeat after defeat? Will they see themselves shorn of the power to govern, and take no step to appeal to the people? Will they be humiliated either by this House or the other, and still retain office; or is it their intention, immediately the Bill is rejected in another Chamber, to go to our masters? That is an important matter. One would be much inclined to vote straight-away against the measure if one found it would have that happy result to the Government. Because, if there is one thing which will help this Bill through, it is the fact that certain people desire to avoid as long as possible the catastrophe of a general appeal to the electors. That may be a safeguard to the Government. But meanwhile, we in this House, having impressed on the Government the need for farther explanation of their ultimate intention, must desire some farther explanation as to whether the Government are sincere in this measure; whether they really believe in this form of taxation; whether it is absolutely the unanimous policy of the Government, or whether after all it is, as I intimated before, the policy of the Attorney General, backed up of course by the Minister for Works, the member for Fremantle (Hon. J. Price), who of course may be considered, not as I was about to say the Sancho Panza, but the Don Quixote of the Government. I was twitted a little while ago when I suggested that the whole of the troublesome course on which the Ministry launched was the result of including the Attorney General in the Ministry. They had to adopt this policy—a land policy and the Attorney General—or not adopt him at all. And I think I am justified in reading the old records collected by another member of the Opposition of the Attorney General's speeches. [*Mr. Collier:* They are very bold.] They are rather good, I think. He has degenerated since. I rather admire this speech of his delivered in 1904. [*Mr. Angwin:* He was not Attorney General then.] No. As I say, he had not been amongst

his present companions, was not then acquainted with those who offer to give the baby to somebody else to nurse. In April, 1904, he says:—

"The Premier, in the policy speech he delivered in Kalgoorlie, announced that if his party were returned to power he would consider the advisability of introducing legislation authorising taxation on the basis of unimproved land values, to be imposed in certain cases on large estates. I absolutely dissent from this policy, and I do so for two reasons, each sufficient in itself to justify that decision. If a great broad principle such as this is right and just, then it is right and just that its application should not be a limited one."

This is really excellent. It is as good as any member on this side of the House could have said. He continues:—

"So much must be clear to the sense of any reasoning man. The second reason for my objection is that in a matter not of an administrative character, involving the application of a great, a wide and a general principle, I am wholly opposed to leaving to the discretion, perhaps to the whim, of any Minister, or of any Ministry, to set aside the laws of Parliament, and to use as a possible weapon in his hands the power which has only been entrusted to him as an administrative agent for the purpose of giving not a partial but an entire effect to the will of the people."

Had I been present during the speech I should have thrown up my hat. I should have said, "This is the man for the country."

Mr. Foulkes: Those views were not acceptable to the country. Mr. Keenan was not then returned.

Mr. WALKER: I will show why he was returned. His speech continues:—

"My position is a perfectly clear one. I am a supporter of the principle, and as such I altogether decline to be a party to any measure not fully carrying it out. And I most emphatically decline to give such extraordinary and improper powers to a Minister or any Ministry as an enact-

ment enforceable at his pleasure would amount to."

That was in 1904. He won respect, he won adherents all through Kalgoorlie by that speech. There is no doubt whatever that between the delivery of that speech and 1905 his popularity went up from zero to the zenith. Then in 1905 he recognises this and says:—

"I have remarked that the principle is essentially a just one, and has won the support of a very large percentage of the electors. Its justice has been amply demonstrated."

And once more:—

"It is unnecessary, I think, that I should dwell at length on my political platform, inasmuch as I placed it very fully before the electors only 16 months ago."

That is, when he had delivered the speech I have just read. And this is beautiful; this is still more after my own heart:—

"And I do not belong to the school who change their views to order."

We see now the source of this Bill. It started in 1904. And of course Mr. Keenan became Attorney General, and got his right to have a Bill introduced by the Government. Immediately he became an adherent to all those chameleon changes which he utterly and completely condemned in 1904.

The Attorney General: Is that statement of yours even relatively correct?

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly. I will quote another speech of 1906, where he apologised for it:—

"I believe this—every day we learn something. It is absurd to imagine that we cannot see the errors of opinions held previously. There is nothing so absurd as the taunt of changing opinions."

A clear admission. He is defending his changes:—

"The only time the taunt is worthy of recognition is when a change is taken, not from absolute conviction, not from any examination of the reasons, but to obtain popular favour or some personal profit."

I am not manufacturing anything, I am giving the Attorney General in sequence.

The Attorney General : You are only speaking through ignorance, or deliberate ignorance.

Mr. WALKER : That shows the haphazard way in which the Attorney General speaks. How can there be deliberate ignorance ?

The Attorney General : Because you were in Kalgoorlie when I made the speech.

Mr. WALKER : Ignorance is a thing that has no deliberation about it. It is the absence of deliberation that makes ignorance. This only shows how casual, thoughtless and lacking in discrimination the Attorney General sometimes is in his utterances ; he is too hasty. I have taken these speeches as reports of his utterances. Of course if the hon. member denies that he ever said any of these words we will have to produce the documents in which he is reported, that is the newspapers. These are taken from the newspapers. [*Mr. Gordon* : There are lots of things you would deny if the newspapers were produced.] That is quite possible, but I take it the Attorney General would have corrected these speeches if they had been absolutely inaccurate ; but he has never corrected them, to my knowledge at all events. They stand there. Now what is the position ? In 1904 the Attorney General said that he would have this Bill without any deviation from the principle, he would not have it at the whim of any Minister or of any Ministry, he would not have the Bill so that it could be altered to meet particular circumstances ; he would have an upright, just principle, nothing more nor less ; and he was a man of his word and he stood by his principle and would not budge an inch. He has budged. He cannot tell the House that these exemptions to the principle which it introduces were favoured by him. I guarantee that he never suggested to his colleagues that there should be this or that exemption. Although I was not in the Cabinet when these matters were debated, I guarantee from my knowledge of the Attorney General that he advised against that course, that he advised "stand to your guns." One of my friends has shown me something

which will throw some more light on the subject. It was on his advice ; I am confirmed up to the hilt. This is a *Kalgoorlie Miner* of Saturday, 11th April, 1907. Surely the Attorney General will not repudiate this ? It says :—

"It was on his advice that the Government decided upon exemptions, as through them they could achieve a desirable end without creating constitutional difficulties. [*The Attorney General* : Rebates.] It was to his mind an ingenious way out of the difficulty, and had been described by Senator Lynch as one of the bright spots in the Bill. The objections taken against the inclusion of clauses providing for exemptions were more serious. He could quote from the legislation of New Zealand, New South Wales, and South Australia, and every other State which had adopted land values taxation to show that they included exemption clauses. He could point out in regard to the measure foreshadowed by the James Government—

Going back to the very speech that was in respect to the James Government, the first speech I read, dealing with Mr. James as Premier and his principles, the Attorney General said :—

"The Premier in the policy speech he delivered in Kalgoorlie, announced that if his party were returned to power he would consider the advisability of introducing legislation authorising taxation on the basis of unimproved land values to be imposed in certain cases of large estates. I absolutely dissent from this policy, and I do so for two reasons, each sufficient in itself to justify that decision. If a great broad principle such as this is right and just, then it is right and just that its application should not be a limited one."

But here in 1907 he said :—

"He could point out in regard to the measure foreshadowed by the James Government that it was contemplated to allow exemptions, and if he was in a cynical mood he could point out that certain State politicians, when occasion demanded, while candidates for the Federal Parliament,

supported a measure providing for much larger exemptions." There is the fact that we have seen this marvellous change, utterly opposite opinions. A member suggests it is nothing unusual, but I certainly think it is unusual for a gentleman to make a speech like that one day and a speech like this another day. It seems as if politics were purely the result of accident in this country. Men in and men out, and you cannot guess their opinions; that seems to be the policy. We have a right to question the sincerity of the Government in these circumstances, when we have had to witness so many of these lightning changes in such a brief period. Men converted to opposite sides; those in favour of a principle and those against it both converted to suit a policy, to look democratic to take the wind out of the sails of the Opposition, or to try and pose as the master Ministry of democracy; for no other reason; posing as democrats with a great land measure that is no land measure at all. There is not one on this side of the House but is as firmly convinced of the legitimacy of that measure as the Attorney General was in 1904, and I think it is our duty almost to assert our conviction in that principle by supporting the second reading of the measure; but if there are to be those departures from principle outlined in the Attorney General's speech of 1904, what is our duty?—[*Mr. Taylor*: To throw out the Bill.]—Clearly it is to fight against any innovation against the strict principle, and clearly to defeat any attempt to make the measure one of that elastic character that suits every individual member supporting the Government. Our duty is, if we cannot succeed, to do our very utmost to defeat the measure, and I say by defeating this measure we can at the same time defeat the Government and compel them to seek the opinion of the whole of the country, not alone upon this question but upon many other questions that are down upon the business paper, and more particularly to seek the opinion of our masters upon the members of the Government themselves. We should do a great boon to this country and to the

Government if the Government saw their way clear to abandon the excrescences on the Bill, those violations of principle to suit particular parties. Unless they come down to bedrock, to the speech of the Attorney General in 1904, I ask members of this House who are not entirely under the hand of the Whip, but are supporting the Government, to let conscience guide them, and let them treat the Government for their playing with principles as the Government deserve. The day has gone past when a country is to be governed by fireworks, or simply by the whims, to quote the Attorney General, of a Minister or the Ministry of the day. The day has gone past when the people are going to be humbugged by appearances; they want solidity, they want earnest men who are not of the school who change to order. That is the kind of men the people are looking for, and if by the defeat of the Bill we can let the people outside decide whether the Government are of that order or not, I say once more by going to the country we will have shown a lesson that will be of value not only for the present but for the future.

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

BILL—PORT HEDLAND-MARBLE BAR RAILWAY.

In Committee.

Mr. Daglish in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short Title:

Mr. TAYLOR: Some members believed a better route could be chosen to serve the people of the Pilbarra Goldfield. An amendment might be moved on this clause to give the House an opportunity of deciding as to the best route.

The Minister for Mines: It would be better to move on the next clause.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was necessary that the House should be in possession of all the facts the Government could give for constructing the line from Port Hedland to Marble Bar. Members acquainted with that part of the State had said that the country would be better served by a

line starting from some other point than Port Hedland. Since, however, he was assured by the Minister for Mines that an opportunity of discussing this point would arise in the consideration of Clause 2, he would not now proceed farther.

Clause passed.

Clause 2—Authority to construct :

Mr. TAYLOR moved as an amendment :—

That in line 2 the words "Port Hedland" be struck out and "Balla Balla" inserted in lieu.

During the second reading, ample statistics had been quoted to show that Balla Balla would be a better starting point than the one proposed in the Bill. The Government claimed that Port Hedland was the best starting point because there was there a fine harbour ; but he was assured by one who knew the North-West coast well that the harbour at Port Hedland was merely a basin where at times vessels were practically high and dry. His informant was farther of opinion that if the sandbar were interfered with, the effect would be that the harbour would silt up. Fulllest information on such points was necessary before a measure of this description, committing the country to an expenditure of at least a quarter of a million, was passed. The number of people this railway was designed to serve was too small to justify the Committee in passing the Bill without farther information. The Treasurer and the Minister for Mines had claimed that the line would open up good country and tend to the development of goldfields in the North-West ; but while the Minister for Mines quoted the large quantities of stone crushed for stated large returns of gold, he admitted that the particular mines were practically abandoned. Prospectors did not usually abandon two-ounce and three-ounce propositions for the mere reason that there were not railway facilities. Propositions at Black Range had not been abandoned because of the absence of railway communication ; and in the early days propositions at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie were worked before there was railway com-

munication. [Mr. Bath : The mining propositions along the alternative route from Balla Balla might also have been abandoned.] He understood that the alternative route passed through the mineral belt almost from the start, while that from Port Hedland, it was admitted, did not touch the auriferous country for the first 70 miles. It was necessary that the battle of the routes be fought on the starting and terminal points of the line.

The CHAIRMAN : The amendment could not be accepted, being irrelevant to the title, which set out that the Bill was for the construction of a railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar.

The MINISTER FOR MINES hoped the Chairman would not insist on the ruling, merely because certain words had been put in the title.

Mr. TAYLOR : It had been his intention to move to strike out the words "Port Hedland," when Clause 1 was under consideration, but he had accepted the intimation by the Minister that the object would be met by a similar course on Clause 2. If the Chairman would not now permit him to move the amendment, he would later on move for recommitment of the Bill.

Mr. BATH : While not presuming to say what procedure was correct, yet on the Bill for construction of a line from Jundakot to Armadale, an amendment was admitted and discussed for striking out "Armadale" and inserting "Mundijong." That was a recent precedent.

The CHAIRMAN : The passing of Clause 1 did not in any way affect his ruling. His impression was that the proper time for discussing the question whether the railway should be built from Port Hedland or some other point was on the second reading. Since, however, he had some degree of doubt on the point, he would now accept the amendment. It must be distinctly understood that he much doubted the power of the Committee to alter a Railway Bill in the manner suggested in the amendment ; but he would look the matter up, and would later be in a position to express a definite opinion on the point. For the

moment he was of the opinion that the amendment was inadmissible.

Mr. McLARTY: The Leader of the Opposition was in error in saying an amendment affecting the title of the Jandakot-Armadale Railway Bill had been accepted and discussed in the House. He had been directed by the then Speaker that he could not move such an amendment.

Mr. BATH: An amendment of that character could not be moved on a motion "That the Bill be now read a second time."

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The contention of the member for Murray was correct.

Several Members: The member for Murray was speaking then on the second reading, not in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The mover of the amendment prefaced his remarks with the statement that he personally knew very little of the subject, but quoted much on the authority of some people who presumably had some acquaintance with the North-West. His desire to see the railway start from Balla Balla showed clearly that the hon. member had but little knowledge of the North-West, or of the difficulties attendant on those engaged in the mining industry there. Balla Balla was simply a deserted township on a tidal creek, where goods could only be lightered on small craft. During the second reading, a big point was made of the possibility of a good harbour being made at Depuch Island. The Government now had a survey party making investigations, for the purpose of advising what were the possibilities of a good harbour being made there, and also a connection between Depuch Island and the mainland. If the railway was intended to serve the mineral belt from Whim Creek to Wodgina, it would have to start not from Balla Balla but from Depuch Island. The question to be considered was which line of railway would serve the greater number of people and be likely to do the greatest amount of good. A railway from Depuch Island *via* Whim Creek to Wodgina would not serve any country beyond Cooglegong. Flying sur-

veys carried out by Mr. Anketel with a view to advising whether a railway could be carried southerly from Hedland to serve Wodgina and proceeding thence to Marble Bar, showed that a line of 190 miles would be necessary to reach Marble Bar by that route; and would entail very sharp curves and grades of 1 in 30. This showed the impossibility of constructing a line from Depuch Island that would be of any assistance to Marble Bar or the Nullagine field. It had been said the line should go direct from Wodgina to Nullagine; but the country between Cooglegong and Nullagine was equally as precipitous as that between Wodgina and Marble Bar. It was impossible to run a railway from Nullagine without considerable extra distance in deviating to the south, entailing increased cost of construction; and such line would give no assistance to Bamboo Creek, Yandicoogina, Mosquito Creek, and Marble Bar. If the desire was to open up the country towards Whim Creek and Wodgina, the passage of the Bill should be delayed until information became available in regard to the suitability of Depuch Island as a starting point. Present information, however, showed that the best part of that country judged by developments to date, was the goldfields from Bamboo Creek down to Mosquito Creek, and the rich tinfields of Moolyella and Cooglegong. This district would be affected by the construction of this line; but if we built the railway from Depuch Island, it would be no assistance to the people of that field. There were possibilities before Pilbarra West. Developments were going on at Whim Creek, but that place was fairly well provided for at the present time with their own tramway. There was only one mine at Station Peak where three men were employed, still the place ought to employ a larger number. There was an important district at Wodgina which would be affected to some extent by the railway. The Government had power to deviate 20 miles either way, and that provision was inserted in the Bill to enable the Government, if it were deemed wise, to carry the railway 20 miles south and in a southerly direction

towards Marble Bar. The difficulties of transit were owing to the sandy nature of the coast line. If the Government constructed the line as surveyed, it would be a good deal of assistance to the Wodgina field. The State Mining Engineer had made a special report in which he stated that he was satisfied that the construction of the line should be in the direction stated. There would be exceptionally heavy grades if we carried the railway from Depuch Island to Marble Bar or Nullagine, and there would have to be large deviations owing to the precipitous nature of the country. There were many mountains rising over 1,000 feet above the sea level. There were peaks and caverns all along the route traversed by Mr. Anketell from Cooglegong to Marble Bar. To deviate towards Woodgina the line must go 190 miles to reach Marble Bar, the grades one in thirty. If we desired to tap Marble Bar and Nullagine, the railway must start from Port Hedland. If developments took place in the western portion of the field from Whim Creek to Mallina and Station Peak, there would be the prospect of another railway, but that would depend on advice received as to the connection with Depuch Island and the mainland. The member for Roebourne stated he believed that communication from Depuch Island to the mainland could be made at a cost of £50,000. We only had the report of Mr. Babington who gave an approximate estimate that the cost would be £200,000. Special investigation was being made to see if it were possible for this communication to be made. Depuch Island was very prominent, and there were lots of rocks all over the island which lent itself to the building of a causeway from the island to the mainland, which could be done cheaply, and when he said cheaply, members must not forget that there was a rise and fall of tide from 18 to 20 feet, and the reef did not extend right up to the mainland. A huge causeway would have to be built, and therefore Mr. Babington's estimate might be a correct one. If the railway were built from the island there would be all the advantages of the unearned increment, and if

the line started from there it would be no use to the Marble Bar and Nullagine fields. Taking Marble Bar as the terminus, there was Bamboo Creek away to the north-east, there was Moolyella ten miles to the eastward, and Talga Talga, all of which would be assisted. Then there was a good district out at Lalla Rookh and the Warrawoona district was important, and in the easterly direction there was a large area of auriferous country.

Mr. A. C. Gull: Would the detour tap auriferous country?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not after the line left Cooglegong field; but that part of the country had not been well prospected. He understood from the Government Geologist that the conglomerates, famous at Nullagine, extended in a north-westerly direction towards the tinfields. They had been proved to extend 50 miles; and if they were developed all through the Cooglegong district, that would mean from Wodgina to Cooglegong, the railway would prove a benefit to that portion, but the great belt which was proved to be of value was from Nullagine in an easterly direction, and the railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar and thence to Nullagine would serve all that vast area to the east of the Nullagine field. There had been discoveries of copper east of Mosquito Creek, then there was the discovery of asbestos which would be served by the Marble Bar line better than by the other route. We had also to consider another route which would tap Talga Talga, Moolyella, and the districts eastward. He found a difficulty in traversing the district to come to a conclusion as to which was the best port to build a railway from with a view to opening up the greatest extent of auriferous deposits. When the Government considered the question of starting from Depuch Island with a view of assisting the Marble Bar and Nullagine districts, it was found from the precipitous nature of the country an impossibility without great expense. It was not merely a question of expense, but where a railway ran through precipitous country it cost more to work

than if it were altogether level country. The member for Mount Margaret seemed anxious with regard to the development of this field and the small population living there. But he (the Minister) would like to tell the member that it was not altogether the cost of the material that was required for mining which made it absolutely impossible to carry on the industry. Of course that was a very great factor in the development of a field, but there was the delay in getting supplies which was far more costly often than the supplies themselves. Supposing a mine opened up on a large scale at Bamboo Creek and employed a large number of workmen, timber would be required for the purpose of opening up that mine. If a railway were constructed it was more than probable that stocks would be kept, but if stocks were not kept it would not take long to get the supplies requisite for mining purposes. At the present time when people on the field ordered their goods, months elapsed before they received them. There was a great delay in obtaining supplies. The majority of members were satisfied there was a great country in the North-West which should receive assistance from the Government, and that assistance would be given by the construction of the railway. The only question, if we were to assist that district, was which portion of the country we should develop first. Owing to the peculiar nature of the country, it was absolutely impossible to give the slightest assistance to Marble Bar and Nullagine unless the line started from Port Hedland. If it was found that good communication could be obtained from Depuch Island, it would be for the Government at a later date, or some other Government to consider whether it would be wise to make an effort to try and develop what was considered an important belt—that from Whim Creek to the Wodgina district. It was an important proposition but not one which he could recommend at present. From what he had seen of the country and from the records, he did not think it would be very long before con-

sideration should be given to a second proposition.

Mr. A. A. HORAN : : As the question had arisen as to the security of Port Hedland, he would like to supply as much information as he could on the point, having the Admiralty chart before him, and this was open to the inspection of members. It would satisfy members on many statements which had been made but which were not consistent with the facts. Two members representing North-Western constituencies had said that Port Hedland was only open to shipping for 10 days in the year. This was quite inaccurate, and one was rather surprised that members should allow themselves from parochial or other motives to misrepresent the state of affairs in that part of the country. The member for Mount Margaret was incorrect when he referred to the state of the bar at Port Hedland. The state of affairs in the harbour there was that at high tide the bar carried about 18 to 22 feet, and at one place at low water it went three feet with the ordinary rise of tide of 12 feet, thus giving 15 feet at the lowest point. He understood from those who were engaged in the shipping there that 14 feet was the average draught of vessels going into the harbour. He had the authority of two shipping captains, the captain of the "Bullarra," and Captain Smith of the Harbour Department, with regard to this question. The former had told him that there was no place on the North-West coast that could compare in security to Port Hedland. Captain Smith, who had surveyed the port many years ago, was of a similar opinion, while Captain Bell, master of the "Charon," which carried the deepest draught of any vessel in the North-West, had given him the same security. In the *Australia Directory* reference was made to both Port Hedland and to Balla Balla. Referring to the former, it stated :—

"Port Hedland is a secure harbour of about two miles in length, and with depths of two to eight fathoms for nearly one mile. The head and a considerable breadth of sand and mud flats

on either side, dry at low water, and the deep water-way nowhere exceeds two cables across. The entrance between Hunt and Airey points, is one-third of a mile wide, with sand hills on both sides, generally covered with spinifex grass; the land within is low, marshy, and intersected by narrow creeks. The bar, two miles from the harbour mouth, consisting of rock thinly overlaid with sand, has a least depth of three feet at springs, and then generally breaks. There is also an inner bar with one fathom water, three-quarters of a mile north-east of Hunt point. Vessels of 18 feet draught may cross at springs."

As to Balla Balla the same work states:—

"Balla Balla is a small land-locked harbour in the creek south-eastward of Depuch island. There is a jetty, with T-head 157 feet long, tramway, and other shipping facilities. At high water the depth at jetty is 16 feet, and at low water two feet. A reef, dry at low water springs, on which are situated the westernmost two islets of the Forestier group, extends south-westward nearly to the mainland. A bank said to uncover at low water springs, is reported to lie with Depuch island summit bearing south, distant about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles. A small patch, of four fathoms, rock, with 9 fathoms close westward, lies N.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. 12 miles from the summit of Depuch isle."

None would say, therefore, that Balla Balla, with its two feet of water, should be the starting place of the railway. The extra distance involved by the building of the Balla Balla line would be from 70 to 80 miles, and the grade would be 1 in 60 on the Port Hedland line and 1 in 30 on the Balla Balla line. If a railway were to be built it was very important that there should be an ample water supply along the track. They had definite information, and it had so been reported by the Parliamentary Committee, that there was an excellent water supply on the Port Hedland track, and this was proved by the excellent pasturage obtainable. There were no engineering difficulties to be overcome. The cost of

running trains was greatly reduced when there was a good water supply. Mention had been made by one member of the fact that gold had pinched out in the North-West. The facts were, however, that although the mines still carried ore having a high percentage of gold, it had not been possible, owing to the very heavy cost of materials, to work them. Unless a mine could show $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounce stuff it did not pay to work it in the North-West. All members knew that properties having ore of that value on the Eastern goldfields would be showing a handsome profit there now, and he was certain that if a line were built all these properties would be re-opened and re-worked and profits made by the owners. The difference in the cost of carriage and materials would mean the difference between the working of those mines at a profit and a loss. All mariners on the coast said that Port Hedland was safe at all seasons of the year, being well protected from every point.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It had been said by the member for Roebourne that the agitation for the line had begun 15 or 16 years ago; he might tell them that the agitation had been going on ever since and during the interval information had been collected as to the probable results of the building of a railway. If sufficient information had not been obtained by now they would never get enough. If the question of the construction of the line were deferred for farther consideration, as had been suggested by the member for Mount Margaret, from whom would inquiries be made? Would it be from the Parliamentary Committee that visited the place? From the Minister for Mines? From the Government Geologist? From the State Mining Engineer, or perhaps from him (Mr. Underwood)? These were all the sources of information, and all the knowledge that these individuals possessed was already obtained. If we went on inquiring for another 16 years no farther information could be obtained, and if there was not sufficient to go on now there was no use attempting to build the line at all. The member for Roebourne

had said that gold had petered out, but he would inform that member that there was a State mill turning out a few ounces and he personally had a show from which he got a little gold. As to Bamboo Creek, he would point out to the opponents of the Bill that that district was deserted 10 years ago, and those who knew this State then would realise what the management was like up there at that time. Since then the treatment cost and the expense of raising stone had been greatly reduced, more advanced principles having been adopted in connection with mining; but at the time of the abandonment of Bamboo Creek the management of the gold mines there was about the worst in the State. Many of the mines were sunk to the water level and then abandoned and they had not been touched since. He was at the Murchison nine years ago, and had the railway not been built there he was certain that that district would now be in the same state as the North-West. The mining operations had been abandoned to a very considerable extent then and throughout the whole district, including Nannine, there was very little mining going on. The Star of the East mine had only five or six men employed. Meekatharra was known of, but hardly any work was being done there, and it was not for some years afterwards that mining operations on any scale were entered upon. Had the railway not passed Mullewa we would never have heard of Meekatharra, Black Range, or any other good mining districts in that part of the country. They would now be just in the same position as Bamboo Creek and other districts in the North-West. The member for Roebourne said that there was nothing doing in Marble Bar now, but he knew that there was over 500 men in the immediate vicinity, who were earning a very good living there. The member for Roebourne said, except at Wodgina there was no lode tin in the North-West. Displayed in Hay Street were specimens from five different lodes at Moolyella, which shows were waiting for the railway.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine himself to the starting-point of the railway.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If it started at Balla Balla it would not arrive at Marble Bar, and would miss Woodgina where the tantalum was found. Tantalum, according to Sir William Crookes, could hardly be penetrated by a diamond drill.

The CHAIRMAN: The properties of tantalum had nothing to do with the starting-point

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Starting from Hedland would diminish by about 30 miles the distance to Wodgina, and would reduce by at least one-half the cost of cartage to that place. The line would then, as surveyed, go within 10 or 15 miles to Lalla Rookh, where he had worked in a mine which still had a splendid reef waiting development, and which about the 90ft. level had produced over an ounce to the ton. The member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) should recollect that Port Hedland had been used for only about seven years as a harbour; and, even if Balla Balla harbour were as good, starting the Marble Bar line from that place would make the work much more costly. It was said the difference in favour of Port Hedland was only 30 miles; but if the hills were skirted it would be more like 80 miles, and if taken through the hills the line from Balla Balla could hardly be constructed for a million pounds. Opponents of the Bill had not seen the country. Those who had knew the Balla Balla route was practically impossible. As the Minister for Mines said, the route from Balla Balla *via* Cooglegong direct to Nullagine would leave out the best pastoral country; and the pastoral country taken up must be the best. The line from Port Hedland would serve practically all the people in the district. Members did not seem to realise that the North-West was as big as the rest of the State; for they spoke as if one railway could serve the whole North-West. Speaking of running this railway from Roebourne to Nullagine was as sensible as building the Magnet-Black Range railway from Nannine to Berrambie. A line from Roebourne would not be the

Marble Bar line. As well talk of building the Black Range railway from Dowerin.

Mr. BUTCHER: It was the duty of the Legislature to spend the taxpayers money on railways in the best interests of the people, and not for the benefit of a few people interested in Marble Bar and Port Hedland. He did not advocate the line being sent out from Balla Balla, but from Roebourne. The great mineral belt of the North-West started from Roebourne and extended to Mosquito Creek and Nullagine. If the line were built in that direction for a few miles it would pass some important centres where there were gold, tin, copper, tantalum and asbestos. There were copper propositions all around Roebourne, and all the way to Nullagine the railway would pass through mineral country. If the line were built for the convenience of Marble Bar and Port Hedland there was no need for farther comment. He had always advocated that the mineral interests of the North-West should be developed, and if the line were sent from Port Hedland for the first 74 miles it would not touch mineral country at all, but he had not said the country was a desert. If there was any chance of another amendment being carried, or of getting members to consider the advisability of starting the line from Roebourne, he would move an amendment; but it was hopeless, for the Government had sent the Whip round the House and the lash had fallen as heavily on members of the Opposition as on members on the Government side. He felt he was standing alone in the House advocating that the line should be built from Roebourne.

Mr. G. TAYLOR: No one could question the knowledge of this district possessed by the member for Gascoyne; but it seemed that it was no good to have knowledge. If this territory had been a great producing territory 16 years ago, and there was the necessity for a railway line then which had never been built, that part of the State had been sadly neglected; for every Government had built

miles of railway and neglected this important centre. He had a great doubt whether this railway would make this country a great producer as we had heard it would. He had knowledge of the goldfields of Western Australia, and he was satisfied that where the gold was in its virgin state, there would be found the Anglo-Saxon. If people could crush 10,000 tons of ore for 20,000 ounces of gold, then the district would not be abandoned. He did not want to depreciate the value of the country, he wanted to know what its value was. The line, starting from Roebourne, would tap mineral country from the commencement, and the mineral was gold and copper; that was an important consideration. We were not to build the line to open up pastoral areas, for it would not touch any of the stations. Years ago this line was advocated because of the gold to be found in this country; but now the gold was abandoned, and the mineral to be found there was copper. The member for Pilbarra had said that the Marble Bar district contained a population of 500 persons. At Moolyella, the tin field, there were some 500 persons, therefore at Marble Bar which was only 12 miles distant, there could only be the Government officers and no people. Years ago Marble Bar was the El Dorado of that territory, but to-day it was nothing. The railway line would go close to Lalla Rookh.

The Minister for Mines: That was closed down now.

Mr. TAYLOR: As soon as the railway line started there would be a reconstruction, and the present holders would unload. Fuel was a large item in this district; but how much nearer would the line bring fuel to Lalla Rookh. The best plan for the Government would be to place an item on the Estimates, to locate the ore bodies at a depth, and then subsidise steamers so that the freights to Hedland would be reduced.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with the amendment.

Mr. TAYLOR: The question was which route would take the fuel to the mines in the cheapest way; but the main thing was the need for cheaper

freights from Fremantle to Port Hedland. The Minister for Mines gave figures on the second reading as to the number of ounces produced from the localities to be served by the Port Hedland-Marble Bar route, but all of those places had been abandoned. It was not encouraging on the face of the facts outlined by the Minister to pass expenditure of a quarter of a million to give a railway for those localities. It should not go forth that he (Mr. Taylor) was opposing the railway and wished to do an injury to the people of the North-West; his desire was to locate the best route, but in view of the abandonment of these mining centres from which large quantities of gold had been returned from small quantities of stone, there was some room for doubt as to the ore values. It behoved members to have all the facts before them. Several surveys had been made. Messrs. Muir and Anketell, during the time of the Daglish Government, reported on the Port Hedland-Marble Bar route, but their report was not put before the House. Mr. Babinpton made a report during the Rason Ministry of the route from Balla Balla to Nullagine. That report should be before members. It might bear out the statement of the member for Gascoyne.

Mr. Butcher: We should have had that report.

Mr. TAYLOR: The information was asked for on the second reading.

The Minister for Mines: It would be preposterous to start from Balla Balla.

Mr. TAYLOR: Members should be in possession of the reports. The Parliamentary party were not asked to visit Balla Balla, but they passed within 10 miles of the place. The amendment would not be carried, but one must emphasise the necessity for evidence or sufficient material to warrant the construction of the railway from Port Hedland. Certain people in the State believed the project perfectly justifiable, people with vested interests who would probably think him (Mr. Taylor) the worst man in the world for asking for information; but we had practically no information, except that the Government must do something, must put forward a

progressive policy. He was satisfied the shareholders in the mines in the North-West would be pleased at the opportunity for unloading. He thought that they had not the confidence in that part of the country to hang on to their properties. If the mines were as valuable as they were said to be they would be worked. Three-ounce shows would not be abandoned. After 16 years the deepest shaft was only 400 feet. Many mining men might argue it would not be safe to go deeper. Men in prospecting shows dreaded going too deep until they got a market. That was the generally accepted principle in the early days, even on the Eastern Goldfields. No doubt the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) must be congratulated on the stand he was making. The hon. member believed he was doing the proper thing according to his own judgment and that the railway was a good thing for the country, but he (Mr. Taylor) prophesied the day would come when he would not be ashamed of his utterances on this proposition.

Amendment put and negatived; clause passed.

Clause 3—Deviation:

Mr. ANGWIN: The power to deviate 20 miles was more than was generally given. We should have some explanation.

The PREMIER: It was the custom in most railway Bills to allow a certain limit for deviation. In the Bills for the agricultural railways the limit was 10 miles, but in the present instance it had been decided to increase that to 20 miles so as to give an opportunity to make a deviation if it were found advisable.

Mr. TAYLOR: It was a dangerous precedent to establish to provide so wide a margin for deviation as 40 miles, namely 20 miles on either side. Twenty miles in all was quite sufficient for deviation in order to cope with any engineering difficulties that might arise.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There were no engineering difficulties in the way on either the No. 1 or No. 2 route. The desire of the Government in framing the Bill was that, if thought ad-

visable, it would be possible to deviate in a southerly direction from 15 to 18 miles and then go south-easterly towards Marble Bar, the object being to give facilities to Wodgina. A question requiring consideration was whether it would be wise to build a line direct to Marble Bar and afterwards, if Wodgina became so important as to necessitate a line of its own, to make a spur line from the Marble Bar line. The alternative to this was that there should be a line from Depuch Island to Whim Creek and thence to Wodgina. The Government were asking for this margin of 20 miles on either side of the line for deviation so that the route could be carried somewhat farther south if necessary. The only reason was in order that the Government could give consideration to the question of giving a spur railway to the Wodgina field.

Mr. BATH: The statement that there were no engineering difficulties in the way to a large extent justified the doubt cast upon the wisdom of providing for such a considerable deviation on either side of the line as 20 miles. All knew that in connection with railways in this State and elsewhere the provision for deviation on either side of the railway had frequently caused great trouble. There was the case of the Wagin-Dumbleyung line, and there were still many people in that district who resented the alteration made in the route first decided upon for that spur line. [*The Minister for Railways*: The suggested line will go through pastoral country for the first part of the route.] It was presumed that the railway was being built not only for the people of Marble Bar and vicinity but also for the pastoralists along the route and possibly for other industries which might arise owing to the construction of the line. Then in connection with the Katanning-Kojonup railway there was the same difficulty of deviation from the original route, and from a speech by the member for the Province in the Legislative Council it appeared that there was still considerable opposition owing to the deviation. In deciding upon the original route the officers of the department came to their decision from an impartial point of view,

and took into consideration the contour of the country and the interests to be served by the construction of the line. If deviation were allowed the influences of people along the route would be brought to bear with the result that those charged with the administration and construction of the line would be pulled this way and that, and probably the route would ultimately be very different from the original one and a much worse one. The Government might provide for a possible contingency as to Wodgina, but that could have been done by a specific provision for deviation along the railway at the point where the spur line would branch off. He was inclined to the opinion that a 10-mile deviation on either side of the railway would be quite sufficient.

Question put and passed.

Clause 4—Power to Governor to compulsorily purchase land within 15 miles of railway:

The PREMIER: This was the usual clause provided in railway Bills, and although not so necessary in Bills of the character of the one before the House as in those for railways travelling through agricultural country, it was thought advisable to make the provision. After having seen the provision in the Western Australian Bills the Tasmanian Government had decided to introduce a similar clause in all their railway measures.

Mr. TAYLOR: Land on either side of the railway was the property of the State, and there was no necessity therefore for the clause.

Mr. ANGWIN moved—

That the clause be struck out.

If the land already belonged to the Crown there was no necessity for the clause to be inserted. The effect that might be produced by the excision of the clause was that it would make the Government officials more careful with regard to disposing of any of the property contiguous to the railway.

The Chairman: The member could vote against the clause. His amendment was a direct negative.

Mr. TAYLOR: There were arguments to be used in favour of striking out the

clause, the chief being as mentioned by Mr. Angwin, that it would make the officers of the Crown more careful not to dispose of any of the land. The line would cost a quarter of a million of money without taking into consideration the cost of the harbour at Port Hedland, so the Government should therefore husband the land on either side of the railway. Such a clause was necessary where a line passed through old settled country, but there was no necessity for it when it was all Government land along the route.

The PREMIER: The clause would probably be unnecessary, but within fifteen miles of the route the Government might find it advisable to acquire some holding, though they would hardly purchase an area for closer settlement. Better retain the clause.

Clause passed.

Clauses 5, 6, 7—agreed to.

Minimum Wage, Subletting.

New Clause—Minimum rate of wages to be prescribed, and subletting prohibited :

Mr. SCADDAN moved that the following stand as Clause 8:—

Any contract to be entered into for the construction of the railway shall contain provisions—(a.) Prescribing the minimum rate of wages to be paid by the contractor to the several classes of persons employed by him on the works ; and (b.) Prohibiting the subletting of the works, or any portion thereof, or any sub-contract for the execution of the works, or any portion thereof, or any contract by way of piecework in any form whatever for any portion of the works.

In all such Bills, this provision was essential. Last year we passed the Coolgardie-Norseman and Ravensthorpe-Hopetoun railway Bills, and recently the Premier replied to the member for Dundas that Subclause 3 of the general conditions of contract provided that all daily-wage men should be paid at the current rates applicable to the trades in the district. [*Hon. F. H. Piessé* : That provision worked for the last eight years.] It had

not worked at all, and was useless, for the Norseman railway contractor was letting all the work by the piece, and the men were reported to be receiving from 4s. to 6s. a day, or about 5s. a chain.

Mr. Collier : Eightpence or ninepence a yard.

The Premier : Subclause (a.) of the new clause was already in contracts.

Mr. SCADDAN : No. The contract clause prescribed "the ruling rate in the district" ; but there might be no ruling rate in the district. There was none at Widgemooltha. A specific rate must be prescribed.

The Premier : Did the hon. member object to any subletting ?

Mr. SCADDAN : Certainly. The contractor could at once dismiss incompetent men, and only the wage system should be permitted.

The Premier : Suppose he employed a new chum ?

Mr. SCADDAN : If a man was not suitable he could dismiss him. There was no difficulty in finding competent labour for a fair wage.

Mr. HOLMAN : As to the Norseman railway, a letter he had received stated that numbers of workmen came to Coolgardie from the coast soon after the tenders closed, and that the contractors, the Kurrawang Company, started the line at a price for piecework never before heard of in this State—4s. 6d. a chain for the lighter forming, with two drains, and for the heavier forming 6s. for seven to eight inches, and 9s. up to a foot ; and that at such prices it took men all their time to make tucker.

The Premier : What were the dimensions of the side drain ?

Mr. HOLMAN : Two feet nine inches on the top, one foot deep, and 10 inches at the bottom. Having the men in their toils, this sweating company compelled them to accept starvation prices. During the Federal elections we heard that Mr. Hedges, of the Kurrawang Company, always paid the highest rate of wages. He would like Mr. Hedges to come to Western Australia and be compelled to do the work which he was asking the men to do at the present time,

and he would not make wages. The same trouble had occurred on all the railways which had been constructed. The time had arrived when the Government should protect the men who had to accept work on these railways. When the Government constructed the Cue-Nannine line by contract the men received 11s. a day. That wage should be paid to the men who were working on the Coolgardie-Norseman line, instead of the present starvation wages.

The PREMIER: There was no objection to Subclause (a.) of the amendment, but he objected to subclause (b.). He had a good deal of experience on railway work, and on every contract an opportunity should be given to the men to do piece-work, which would give a chance to every man who liked to work to make something more than the man who did not know how to use the pick and shovel. There was nothing to prevent piece-work men making 12s. to 14s. a day. He would never ask a navvy to work for less than 1s. an hour, and in regard to the proposal that a higher amount should be paid for building railways provided higher wages were paid, the Government were now paying 8s. a day, and where the men had to work in wet ground as was the case on the line to Darkan and where the men were some distance from the store the Government paid 9s. a day for eight hours. He was prepared to agree to Subclause (a.), but would not tie the hands of the men who were prepared to do piece-work. The Government had had experience in connection with the ring-barking done by the unemployed. Some men could make 4s. a day, while others could make 12s. The man with experience should reap the advantage.

Mr. Scaddan: What about the other fellows?

The PREMIER: Would the hon. member put all men on an equality?

Mr. Scaddan: A minimum rate should be prescribed.

The PREMIER: A man had an opportunity of working at day work. He (the Premier) had not had an opportunity of checking the figures given by the member for Murchison, but roughly they

worked out about 10½d. a yard. He was not sure whether the member stated that the forming was included in the work.

Mr. Holman: Yes.

The PREMIER: A man had always to make the excavation and the formation.

Mr. BATH: If the Premier spoke from experience in regard to piece-work, he must know that if men had to deal with one class of employers all the time who were prepared to continue the rate which would enable the average man to earn 9s. or 10s. or 11s. a day there would be no objection, but the invariable experience was to use the incapacity or the less degree of skill of one man to bring the man who could get a higher rate down, making him suffer all the time. Where we found one employer doing a fair thing there were numbers of others who would take the advantage all the time. The member for Katanning might be under the impression that the clause which now existed providing for the payment of a current rate of wages in the district was sufficient to meet the case, but it would not meet the case in connection with the Coolgardie-Norseman line, for after getting outside the radius of Coolgardie there was no current rate.

The Premier: There was a special rate for navvies on the Kurrawang line.

Mr. BATH: Some low rates were existing along that line, but the work on the Coolgardie-Norseman line was outside the radius of the Kurrawang line.

The Premier: It was in the same district.

Mr. BATH: What was meant by "the same district"? It all depended on the interpretation of the term "district." The drafting of the clause was absolutely loose and allowed the employer to evade it every time. Apart from that there was an opportunity by dispensing with day labour and introducing piece-work. Where contractors tendered with the honourable intention of paying fair wages, some one could tender at a lower rate, intending to take advantage of the piece-work system and would get the contract

every time. The unscrupulous man knew that he could do this, and it was apparently so in this case. The men employed on this railway construction were driven there, owing to the big depression existing in the State, to secure work in the hope of getting a decent rate of wages, but some were getting as low as 5s. a day on piece-work. Although the State desired to get the work carried out at a reasonable cost, it was not to its advantage to get railways constructed at sweating rates of wages. It must reflect disastrously on the State. So far as the proposed clause was concerned, he would like to see it passed in its entirety, because contractors could get a full supply of competent labour if they paid a fair rate of wages; and if men were not willing to do a fair day's work, the contractor could dispense with their services and in a day get men to fill the places. There was no difficulty of imposing terms that would be a hardship on the contractor. If, as the Premier asked, only the first portion of the clause were retained, it would mean that by introducing the piece-work system the provision contained in the clause could be absolutely evaded. If the first portion only were retained the minimum rate should be prescribed to apply to those engaged on piece-work; otherwise sweating would be carried on, a thing to be avoided in all contracts carried on under the Government. In the whole experience of construction works, here as well as elsewhere, the testimony of the engineers went to show that the State could always get a more reliable piece of work carried out by day labour under departmental supervision than by letting the work on contract. In the letter already referred to we saw the way the provisions of the contract were being evaded by the covering up of places by the earth taken out of the sides, and in innumerable instances we had seen the way contract work had resulted in slum work, causing a good deal of expenditure after the State took over the railway to put it on a proper basis. The Government were supposed to have had the Eastern Railway from Southern Cross to Kalgoorlie constructed at a reasonable rate; but after the line was handed over, an army

of men had to be placed on it at enormous expense to put it into a decent working condition. That was no advantage to the community; it meant that the State in the end paid much more for the construction of the line than if the work had been done at the outset on the day labour system under departmental inspection.

The Premier: It was the fault of the engineer who gave the certificate.

Mr. BATH: The contractor could always make it worth while to the engineer not to see things. All corruption, all bribery, all winking at these things came about because it was worth, on the part of any capitalist, to pay something to have these things smothered up. That was true in America; it was true of all scandals in Australia. If we wanted a fair job we should get competent men on day labour under departmental supervision. It would be more satisfactory so far as the State was concerned. We were told as to the cheapness of the construction—the tender being under the tender of the Public Works Department—in the case of the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway; but the contractors had an advantage owing to the fact that on the completion of the line to Widgiemooltha they could carry goods over the railway. Therefore, the Government were not saving money by letting the contract to those people at a lesser rate. The country would have been better served, and we would be more satisfied at the expenditure of our money, if the Government had continued the construction on the day labour system under departmental supervision. So far as the proposed clause was concerned, it was essential as it stood; but if the Premier opposed the second portion, he should make some provision in paragraph (a) by which the minimum rate should be prescribed for piece-work as well as for day labour.

Mr. HORAN supported the proposal, and was surprised that the Premier was not prepared to accept the second part of the clause. He was doubly surprised in view of the terms of the contract. On his recent visit to Coolgardie he discovered that all that was said about the low rate of wages paid was perfectly true. Men worked adjacent to Coolgardie at

10s. and 11s. a day; but beyond that, piece-work panned out at 5s. a day, and in some cases it did not even average that. It was accounted for in one measure by the crowd of men who went to the work anxious to get a job at any cost. On his return to Perth he obtained the conditions of contract, and believed Clause 18 of the contract to be sufficient to cover the proposed amendment, because it prohibited subletting. The provision was:—

“The contractor shall not sublet any portion of the works, nor enter into any subcontract for the execution of the works or any portion thereof.”

Finding the minimum clause was provided, he communicated verbally with the Minister for Works to ascertain whether any relaxation of the contract had been given to the W.A. Firewood Supply Company. The Minister informed him that there had been no relaxation. If the interpretation of the regulation were as suggested, a very serious breach of the clause had been committed. A marginal note to Regulation 18 stated:—“Contractor not to assign or sublet contract without written consent of Minister.” He had communicated by telegram with the member for Fremantle in the House of Representatives, to give him an opportunity of vindicating the position he took up at election time, as to the high rate of wages of which he boasted, and to allow him to know the rate of wages which was being paid on the line in question. It appeared to him clearly, that in the case of that line, a breach of the contract had been committed. It was suggested that the interpretation he placed upon the regulation was not the correct one, and if that were so he hoped that the Premier would accept the proposed new clause, which dealt with the question.

Mr. TAYLOR: With regard to the section from the agreement quoted by the last speaker, he could agree with the interpretation placed upon it. The only alternative meaning of the regulation was that it prohibited the whole of the work being sublet to any other firm. It was perfectly clear to his mind, that any person administering the Bill who was unfavourable to sweating, could prevent

it. The Premier had stated he would accept the first section of the proposed new clause, but not the second section which had as its object the prevention of sweating. He was in Coolgardie when the first sod was turned of the Norseman line, and there were so many men waiting there to get work that they were ready to accept any conditions that were offered. He had been interviewed while there by the men as to the date of the arrival of some of the rails, so that a start might be made. Many of these men had been waiting there for weeks in order to try and get a job on the line, and it was no wonder therefore that they would accept any conditions that offered. He believed that Mr. McDowell, who was building the line, knew all about railway construction, and how to get the work done in the best way for his employers, and at the cheapest possible rate. That gentleman, however, had no scruples about offering the men the smallest possible wages, and when he found men willing to accept piece-work at a reduced cost, by means of which first-class men working 8 or 10 hours a day could only earn 8s. or 10s., he was only too glad to get them to do it. His experience all through had been that wages were not based upon the work of the best workman, but upon that of the moderate or very poor workman. The principle adopted by employers was to give the smallest possible wage for the greatest possible amount of work. He knew, from his personal experience how employers based their rate of wages. He hoped the suggested new clause would be inserted in the Bill. Clause 18 would convey to any ordinary person that it was impossible for the contractor to sweat or to sublet without the consent of the Minister, who practically said he had not given consent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As to Subclause (b) of the new clause, the question of sub-letting had never been referred to him since he took office; and he believed that for many years past the sub-letting permitted by the Government was only sub-letting on a large scale. The objection to piecework in the North-West, where men were with difficulty ob-

tained, was not obvious. On several occasions the Works Department had to send men there from the coast. His attention had never been drawn to sub-letting. Many workers would not agree with the Opposition as to piecework, but would prefer piecework when the rates were reasonable. From the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) one would conclude that every contractor was a rogue and a sweater; but the average contractor paid fair rates. If the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Horan) would give him the particulars mentioned of the work on the Norseman railway, inquiry would be made and impartial justice dealt out. The abolition of piecework would be regrettable. The department, in constructing the Donnybrook-Preston railway, let some piecework, thus giving employment to men who could not otherwise obtain work as navvies.

Mr. UNDERWOOD supported the new clause. The argument that piecework was needed for incompetent workmen had been disposed of years ago. A man who could not earn the minimum wage should try to do something else. The Premier held there was a difference between a navvy and a new chum. But the navvy, it was said, needed only a thick head and a strong back, and a new chum who could not do a navvy's work should try other work. There was some difficulty in getting men in the North-West; but trouble arose when men were brought there to work for less than the local rates. Men engaged in Perth to construct a tramway at Whim Creek at 12s. a day refused to work on finding that local miners received 13s. 4d. If the contractor were allowed to pay as he chose there would be great dissatisfaction, and the construction of the railway would be delayed. The new clause should appear in all railway Bills, the existing provision having failed.

Mr. Taylor: Would the Attorney General give a legal interpretation of Clause 18 of the conditions of contract?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Unlike the hon. member, he could not give an opinion off-hand on a contract which he had not drawn, and which was on the

face of it open to more than one construction. It would weary the Committee if he pointed out that apparently the second portion of Clause 18 of the conditions of contract related to an assignment of moneys payable, and provision was made that if any such act took place on the part of the contractor the Minister had power to direct the money to be forfeited. But in regard to the first portion of the clause it would be inoperative in regard to an assignment of that character. He was asked to express an opinion right off on the reading of the clause, as to what any portion of the words meant. Was that reasonable? It would be absurd for him to say any portion of the words meant this or that. One had to inquire what was the ordinary meaning of such a phrase in contracts of a similar character, and he was not in a position to say what was the meaning of the words "any portion of the works" in an ordinary contract. It should be left to a far more critical examination of contracts.

Mr. TAYLOR: According to the Attorney General the agreement was of no value except to compare it with another agreement.

The Attorney General: The interpretation of the phrase.

Mr. TAYLOR: There was a complete clause pointing out what the Minister should do and the Attorney General could have given an opinion on that but it would have been against the administration by his colleague. The Minister had power under one clause of the agreement to prevent sub-letting or sweating, notwithstanding the way the Attorney General had tried to cloud the issue. If it was the intention of the Government to prevent sweating and to build their railways in the State and give a fair wage to the workmen, and if Clause 18 had failed, there was nothing to prevent a new clause being inserted in future contracts. Work was so scarce at the present time that many men would carry their swags from portions of the Eastern Goldfields beyond Peak Hill and beyond Lake Way right up to the North-West to secure an opportunity of working on this railway line. The competition for

work would be so keen that there would be a necessity for such a clause being in operation.

Mr. SCADDAN : It was to be regretted the Attorney General could not give a legal opinion on this particular clause in the contract. A contract of this description would be sent to the Crown Law Department for an opinion before any signatures were affixed.

The Attorney General : Those conditions had been drawn years ago.

Mr. SCADDAN : Surely the Crown Law Department should be in a position to interpret a clause they had drawn up?

The Minister for Works : This form had been in the department for years.

Mr. SCADDAN : We could only come to one conclusion that it did not apply to piecework, but that it applied to subletting.

The Minister for Mines : That was the interpretation always put on it.

Mr. SCADDAN : The Attorney General said he was not prepared to say whether it would apply in this case. Parliament should be in earnest and should see that a fair thing was done to everyone. It was all very well for the Attorney General to make a joke.

The Attorney General : No joke was intended.

Mr. SCADDAN : There was no room for joking in this matter. The member for Mount Margaret should have been more serious; the hon. member was assisting the Premier in opposing the clause.

Mr. Taylor : That was not intended, but one could not help laughing at the roundabout way in which the Attorney General evaded the point.

Mr. SCADDAN : An amendment modifying the clause could be accepted. He would absolutely prohibit piece-work, but if we could not go that far we should prescribe the rate for piece-work for the district. The member for Hannans was aware that in Government tailoring contracts there was a rate provided covering piece-work. Unless we fixed a minimum for piece-work he would divide the House on the clause as it stood.

Mr. ANGWIN : The action of the Attorney General demonstrated how

useless it was having a Minister Attorney General. When we had a legal gentleman holding the office of Attorney General it was due that he should give to members his legal knowledge on any matter when it was required. [*The Attorney General* : Off hand?] The hon. member must have been well acquainted with the matter. If the Attorney General had given his legal opinion it might have influenced members. Seeing that the Attorney General had no opinion to give, progress might have been reported so that legal advice could have been obtained. This was one of the most important questions brought before the House this session. The practice of subletting was growing into all our works. No doubt the object of the member for Katanning in originally placing the clause in contracts was to prohibit bad workmanship as well as sweating.

Mr. WARE regretted so much mirth was being indulged in in connection with this matter. The Attorney General was absent for a considerable time while the question was under discussion, and apparently the only information the hon. gentleman had to go on before rising to speak was a garbled statement given to him by the Minister for Works and the Premier. Knowing that those two gentlemen were opposed to the insertion of the clause he felt sure the Attorney General did not have a fair "go" on the question. If the minimum wage were fixed there would be nothing to prevent a contractor from paying a very good man a higher wage than a poor man; but if piece-work were allowed it would operate the same as in all other instances of that kind. There was only one safeguard in piece-work, and that was to compel a contractor to state his minimum wage in the contract, and to insist that not less than that wage should be paid. The clause would be quite useless without the subclause. It had been said it was unnecessary to discuss the subclause, owing to the fact that there would not be a surplus of labour in the North-West; but the position was that if the subclause were thrown out to-night, it would be very hard to get it in-

serted in any other contract which might be brought before the House. He hoped that the whole of the proposed new clause would be included in the Bill.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: It was, a matter for regret that the Premier opposed the proposed clause, and that a question of this description, which might mean so much to men who worked in all sorts of weather for a bare subsistence, should be dealt with in a spirit of levity. A defined line should be laid down for both employers and employees. Subletting and piece-work were two distinct questions, and they could not be looked upon, as had been suggested, as one and the same. A sub-contractor would always be placed in the position of making a very nice living at the expense of the men without any exertion on his part. The levity of the debate manifested the necessity for the inclusion of the subclause in every public works contract. If the proposed new clause were allowed to be struck out it would be very difficult on any future occasion to insert it in contracts that might be brought before the House. He hoped the Premier would withdraw his opposition.

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

Ayes	12
Noes	18

Majority against .. 6

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Bolton	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Butcher
Mr. Collier	Mr. Davies
Mr. Holman	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Horan	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Troy	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Underwood	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Ware	Mr. Male
Mr. Taylor (Teller).	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Varyard
	Mr. Layman (Teller).

Question (new clause) thus negatived.

Schedule—Description of line of railway:

Mr. ANGWIN moved that progress be reported.

Motion negatived.

Schedule put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 12 minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 21st August, 1907.

	PAGE
Question: Timber Tests, Overtime	939
Bills: Bankers' Cheques, 2a. resumed, negatived on division	939
Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration, Com. reported	944

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock.

Prayers.

QUESTION—TIMBER TESTS, OVERTIME.

Hon. J. T. GLOWREY (for Mr. Moss) asked the Colonial Secretary: Will the Government lay on the table all the papers connected with overtime worked in connection with the timber tests made by officers of the Railway Department?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: Yes; if the hon. member will move for the papers the Government will offer no objection.

BILL—BANKERS' CHEQUES.

Second Reading.

Resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central): Mr. Moss in his able speech convinced this