

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 6th September, 1949.

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

QUESTIONS.

NURSES.

As to Engagement from Oversea.

Mr. FOX asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Have any nurses been engaged overseas by the Government to work in hospitals in Western Australia?

(2) Is he aware that 40 nurses are passengers on the "Atlantis" at present in Fremantle en route to New Zealand under contract to the New Zealand Government?

(3) In view of the shortage of nurses in this State, will he endeavour to secure for Western Australia some of the nurses that are evidently available and willing to migrate to Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) A group nomination for 250 trained nurses was lodged by the State with the Commonwealth. Owing to Britain's official estimate of shortage of 40,000 nurses, assistance to migrate has been limited. The Commonwealth fixed migration quotas for nurses for all States and Western Australia was allotted nine per cent. of the total

migrant nurses under the scheme. Forty-seven trained nurses have arrived under personal and group nomination.

MIGRANT COALMINERS.

(a) As to Single Men's Accommodation.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is he aware that shortly there will be arriving in this State from England 50 coalminers (mostly single men) who have been especially selected to work in the coalmines at Collie?

(2) As there are single men already employed at Collie in the coalmines who have had to be accommodated in a tennis court pavilion, will he advise how it is proposed to accommodate those men expected to arrive shortly from England?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) The State Immigration authorities have been advised that amongst the immigrants arriving from time to time will be small groups of single men suitable for coalmining operations, not exceeding in the aggregate 50 men.

(2) The Immigration authorities are already in communication with the local authority, Collie, regarding accommodation.

(b) As to Arrangements for Accommodation.

Mr. MAY (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

Arising from the following answer by the Minister to my question this afternoon, "Immigration authorities are already in communication with the local authority at Collie regarding accommodation," is the Minister aware that the local authority at Collie has no facilities for providing accommodation? I would now like to know whether any intermediate arrangement has been made between the Mines Department and the State Housing Commission for the housing of these men when they arrive from Great Britain?

The MINISTER replied:

I understand arrangements have been made for accommodation of three migrants, who have recently arrived, in private

homes at Collie and, in addition, representations have been made by the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration to me as to any provision which the State Housing Commission might be able to make in the way of hostel or any other accommodation at Collie.

PREMIER'S POLICY SPEECH.

As to State's Powers.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Premier:

(1) What action has he taken to implement that portion of his Policy Speech which stated: "We intend to see that the people of Western Australia get back those essential powers to direct their own affairs"?

(2) With what effect?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) At the first Premiers' Conference I attended I moved a resolution that the whole problem of Commonwealth and State financial relations be referred to a Federal-State convention. Although this was supported by all State Premiers, the Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) dissented and declined to take any action.

HOSPITALS.

As to X-ray Plant, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What was the result of the investigation, promised some time ago, into the proposal to have an up-to-date x-ray plant, capable of taking all classes of x-ray photos, installed at the Government Hospital, Kalgoorlie?

(2) Is he aware that because of the lack of such a plant the inmates of that institution requiring x-ray examination are charged for same at the Commonwealth Laboratory, and are thus placed at a financial disadvantage compared with patients requiring similar treatment at the Royal Perth Hospital?

(3) In view of the reported improvement in the staff position at the Government Hospital, Kalgoorlie, when is it likely that the intermediate ward there, which has been closed for about four years, will be reopened?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A request for free service has been made again to the Director of Health. A reply is awaited.

(2) Yes, in some instances.

(3) It is impossible at present to anticipate when the staff position will enable the ward to be opened.

Mr. STYANTS (without notice) asked the Minister for Health:

The Minister's answer to the first part of my question was not relevant. I asked the result of the investigations promised some time ago into the proposal to have an up-to-date x-ray plant, capable of taking all classes of x-ray photos, installed at the Kalgoorlie hospital and I would like to know what was the result of the promise he made to me some time ago in this House that investigations would be put on hand with a view to providing that plant?

The MINISTER replied:

The Commonwealth department is now housed in portion of the hospital premises, and in the hospital grounds. All the necessary facilities are provided there though in some cases, admittedly, not free of cost. It is not thought reasonable to take over those premises from the Commonwealth and install our own equipment when efficient equipment is already available there. I agree that if possible we should get the Commonwealth to perform this service free of charge.

Mr. Styants: The onus is on the State Government to provide free medical attention.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are at present endeavouring again to take up this question with the Commonwealth Government and have pointed out that it is utilising our premises and hospital grounds. We have asked the Commonwealth Government to see what can be done to meet the wishes of all concerned.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

(a) *As to Time Limits for Debates.*

Mr. HEGNEY (without notice) asked the Premier:

Will he inform the House the real reason why he intends to impose the gag?

The PREMIER replied:

It is not a question of applying the gag, but of getting through the business of the House as to which I will give the hon. member full information later.

(b) *As to Private Members' Rights.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Premier:

Seeing that the Premier intends to move to suspend the Standing Orders tomorrow, which might take something like 24 hours to debate, is it his intention to rob private members of their right to discuss their own business tomorrow?

The PREMIER replied:

I intend to give information to the House tomorrow as to what hours the Government is prepared to sit. Also, it is not the intention to rob private members of their day but if undue time is taken up by members in discussing this proposed motion I do not think the Government can be blamed if private members are denied an opportunity to discuss their business.

Mr. Hegney: What made you think of it for private members' day? You will be sorry for this.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Introduced by the Attorney General and read a first time.

BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—BEES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1949-50.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from 1st September; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,524 (partly considered):

Item, Clerk of Council, £945.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on this item after the member for Fremantle had moved an amendment "That the Item be reduced by £945."

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I point out to members who were not here at the last sitting of the Committee, and also to those who were present, that there is a reason for striking out this item. It is not that I have anything against the gentleman concerned. In fact we hold him in the highest esteem. It would be better for this State to grant not only the Clerk of the Council a life pension but also all other members of the Legislative Council staff. By doing that we could eliminate that Chamber. By striking out all the salary items for the staff the Legislative Council would be unable to carry on. It is time that this place was done away with because of its action of refusing to pass the electoral reform Bill and also, recently, in refusing to pass the land sales control Bill. Those are two things for which it stands condemned.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: None of us has any desire to interfere in any way with the person who happens to hold the position of Clerk of the Legislative Council. However, a move of this kind is necessary to obtain the right to say what we wish to say about the Legislative Council as such. There is no doubt that the Legislative Council, or a majority of its members, treated the present Government with absolute contempt in regard to a move made by it to bring about an improvement in the franchise for that Chamber. We all remember how the leaders of the Government during the last election campaign pledged themselves to the people to liberalise considerably this franchise.

We also remember that the Government would not allow private members to attempt anything along those lines, but insisted on itself bringing down a Bill to improve the franchise for another place. Although a majority of the members of the Council belong to the same Parties as the Premier and the Deputy Premier, they did not hesitate to reject the Government's Bill; and, so far as we are aware, no action was taken against them for so doing. This indicates one of two things, either that the Government was not earnest in introducing the legislation and knew it would be defeated, or that members of the Liberal and Country League and the

Country and Democratic League in another place are at liberty to reject Government legislation, notwithstanding that it contains major items of Government policy. Which-ever of the two explanations the Premier accepts, the situation is deplorable as it affects the public. It establishes a position in which the Government could double-cross the public.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the member for Northam is getting a long way from the amendment.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am trying to indicate, as briefly as possible by way of preamble, why I consider we are justified in making this protest.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment deals only with the staff of the Legislative Council, not with the Legislative Council as such.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am aware of that, but this is the only opportunity we have to make a protest.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: We have to give reasons.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: In moving as he did, the member for Fremantle had no desire to sack the Clerk of the Council; his purpose was to make a protest against the retention of the Legislative Council in its present form.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Northam must realise that the deletion of this item would not affect the Legislative Council, as such.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am quite aware of that, but it does give us an opportunity to register a protest against something we desire to improve.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid I can only allow discussion on the staff of the Legislative Council. I cannot on this amendment allow discussion as to whether the Legislative Council itself is to continue.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I quite appreciate your stand, Mr. Chairman. If the amendment be agreed to, obviously the Legislative Council will be without a Clerk. Would that be in order, Mr. Chairman?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I reckon it would be.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Having no Clerk, the work which he has done in the past would no longer be done unless it were done by the junior members of the staff. It would have to be done by someone. Perhaps the members of the Legislative Council themselves would do the work between them, but it would be a terrible blow to the dignity of some of them. I am thinking for the moment of highly dignified members like the Hon. H. K. Watson, the Hon. H. Hearn, the Hon. G. W. Miles and others. Suppose they did the work voluntarily, we know how they condemn trade unionists who refuse to do certain work under the conditions of an award or industrial agreement, and we know how hot and bothered they become in condemning strikers, yet I feel they would be staging stop-work meetings, refusing to work and perhaps even suggesting a strike. I am anxious to register a protest against the dictatorial manner in which members of the Legislative Council have ignored the public interest by refusing to liberalise the franchise for that Chamber.

The PREMIER: I hope the amendment will be defeated. I know the hon. member's reason for moving it, because he made no secret of it. Apparently, Mr. Chairman, you will not let me state, as fully as I would like, my reasons for opposing the amendment because it is confined to Item 1. When the hon. member moved the amendment early on Friday morning he said he intended, if it were carried, to move to wipe out the salaries of the other officers so as to leave the Legislative Council without any officers at all. It would then not be able to function. Whilst we have two Houses of Parliament, they must have officers. The Constitution lays down that we shall have two Houses, and until such time as that is altered, if ever, we must provide those officers. I could not agree to having a House of Parliament without the necessary officers to permit it to function. I hope the amendment will be defeated.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I do not think I made any secret about what I wanted. If we could get rid of the staff the House could not function. I can visualise that this place, if the two gentlemen on your right and left, Sir, were away, could not get along. By getting rid of the staff we would be taking a step in the right direction, and getting

rid of the Council. Under the Estimates we cannot talk of the Legislative Council or its actions, so we have to get at it in some other way.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

General debate concluded; Votes and items discussed as follows:

Vote—Legislative Assembly, £4,848:

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [5.5]: I desire to utter a most emphatic protest against the hours that the staff of this Assembly have been asked to work during the last few weeks.

The Premier: I agree.

MR. RODOREDA: Those hours are worked solely to suit the needs of this two-by-four Government; this Government that has not even got a majority; this Government that is based on a hotch-potch of Parties assisted by two Independents. It is unworthy of any Government to keep the staff, and incidentally members, until all hours of the morning, at the end of August and early in September. The staff and the members are entitled to believe that there is no reason to finish this session before the ordinary time.

Mr. Kelly: Only political reasons.

MR. RODOREDA: We are justly entitled to believe, and so is the staff, that this session could keep going until, as has occurred on many other occasions, Christmas time. It is absurd to deny us the time to discuss matters which are of importance to us, if not to the Government, by keeping us here until all hours of the morning and refusing to give an adjournment of a debate when a member is legitimately entitled to ask for it. The interests of the State are not being served by keeping the staff here until those hours. What interests are being served?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is the question.

MR. RODOREDA: That is what the Government has to answer.

The Minister for Railways: Why do you keep us here?

MR. RODOREDA: We do not keep members here. Who is in charge of the House? It is the Premier. He could adjourn from

10 o'clock onwards, any night. Did not the Premier himself give his solemn assurance, on a couple of occasions, that ample time would be given to members to discuss all matters of interest to them, on the Estimates? He gave that assurance because of the cutting out of the Address-in-reply debate. This synthetic Hitler leading the Government is trying to put this over Parliament. The people will have something to say about it later on.

The Minister for Railways: They are saying it now.

MR. RODOREDA: Yes, and by the time we have finished with the motion that is to be moved tomorrow, they will have more to say. This is the way dictators rule; by stifling discussion. The Premier was not laughing too much the other morning when he had to cry quits.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Quit, not quits.

MR. RODOREDA: He intended to keep going until he had finished his Estimates. He told me, and two or three other members, that he was going to put every item through. This thing has been done to us and the staff solely to serve the interests of the Government; solely because two members—the member for Middle Swan and the member for Mt. Marshall—are going to resign to go into a higher sphere. What has that got to do with us as a Parliament, or the people of the State? Nothing whatever! Because the Government is not game to face Parliament or an election we are to be stifled in discussion and have two or three months of the session eliminated. I protest most emphatically against this action which is unprecedented in the history of the State. Why did not the Premier start the Parliament six weeks earlier? Because the Government is supported by members who are not game to get up and say a word, does the Premier think we are going to be stifled? I think he will regret very much his application of the gag. If the people of the State will stand this being put over them, I am a very bad judge. The fact of the matter is that the Government cannot take the criticism. It is wilting under it, and it has to get out from under by some means, so it waves the big stick.

The **CHAIRMAN**: Order! I think the hon. member is getting away from the Vote.

Mr. RODOREDA: Not very far. I shall mention the staff in a moment. The staff has to remain here until daylight. We will probably have the spectacle of the staff being kept here until Saturday morning next when we start tomorrow. I am concerned about the state of their health. I do not think they will be able to see out the rest of the session, and we shall then be in as bad a position as the Legislative Council would have been in had we carried the amendment moved by the member for Fremantle. I sincerely hope the Government will think better of this unprecedented action. It is the action of a despot and a dictator. Little did I think, when I saw the Premier take his seat in the first session of this Parliament, that we would be subjected by him to this sort of thing.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He looked quite a genial gentleman.

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, liberal and democratic. Would it not make the angels weep? A member of the Liberal and Democratic League—

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Roebourne is getting a long way from the Vote.

Mr. RODOREDA: I agree. I hope other members on this side of the Chamber will express their concern for the health of the staff who are having to work such inordinately long hours in the first week of September, three or four months from Christmas, when we normally finish a session. I am also concerned about the solid assurance, twice given by the Premier, that he would not keep the staff here until the early hours of the morning and that there would be ample time for every subject to be debated. There is not ample time between now and Christmas to debate and criticise the lack of action of the Government and its failure to keep the promises it made at the election.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [5.12]: I accept the invitation of the member for Roebourne briefly to express concern for the health of the staff of this House and of the "Hansard" staff. I believe that it is due to the long hours worked by the staff that the Sergeant-at-Arms is at present indisposed. Is it not time that the Premier took cognisance of the fact that, owing to the long hours we are sitting, the health of the staff is being

endangered? In addition to their ordinary duties, the "Hansard" staff have a great deal of work to do in connection with a number of Select Committees. There is not only the onerous work of this House, which they are obliged to perform, but also all the work entailed in the reporting of the proceedings of Royal Commissions and Select Committees.

As the member for Roebourne asked, what is it all for? I am concerned also about the welfare of Mr. Speaker and of yourself, Mr. Chairman. The first item in this division refers to Mr. Speaker and "Special Acts." The only time the Speaker uses the "Special Acts" is when he thinks the Government is going to be beaten in a division. When a division has been about to take place I have repeatedly noticed that the Speaker had not time to disrobe himself before rushing to the assistance of the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member for Pilbara discussing Mr. Speaker?

Mr. HEGNEY: No, I am discussing the item on the Estimates, and not Mr. Speaker personally. Far be it from me to reflect on that high and exalted office. I am referring to his physical and mental welfare, which I think are endangered on account of the long hours of work to which he is being subjected.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no item in the Estimates for Mr. Speaker and the Chairman of Committees.

Mr. HEGNEY: No, but there are the "Special Acts" and the usual principle when discussing these Estimates has been that reference can be made—without reflecting on Mr. Speaker or the Chairman of Committees—to one's concern for their welfare. That is what I am doing. I have seen you, Mr. Chairman, although you are a man of great physical capacity—which is exceeded only by your mental capacity—quite oblivious, in the early hours of the morning, to the important business of this country—

The Minister for Lands: That is a reflection on the Chairman.

Mr. HEGNEY: No, far be it from me to reflect on the Chairman. It is a reflection on the Government for overworking one of the chief officers of Parliament, a man who has been elected and appointed to the position

of Chairman of Committees, and who has been forced to sit here night after night, until three or four or even six a.m. How can the Chairman of Committees or Mr. Speaker reasonably keep pace with the requirements of Parliament when forced to work both day and night? They have additional duties outside Parliament, and are entitled to some consideration. What is the reason why it is necessary for us to express concern for the health of Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, and the staff? Why is it that the Sergeant-at-Arms is absent from this House today? I am only a layman, but I have no doubt that his indisposition is due to the long hours we have been working.

The Minister for Lands: You kept him here.

Mr. HEGNEY: He was obliged to remain here while the House was sitting. If there was any strong or reasonable argument in favour of the long hours that are being indulged in—

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Pilbara must not carry on in this way. We are dealing with the Vote concerning the officers of the House.

Mr. HEGNEY: I think it will be agreed that, owing to the long sittings, the health of the staff is being impaired and additional assistance may be required at any time. I think the indisposition of the Sergeant-at-Arms is due to the long hours that Parliament has been sitting, and those long hours have been due, in my opinion, to two members of the Government Parties having to resign by a certain date. The Government knows that the Federal election is to be held on a certain day and it wants to take cover and close Parliament before the first week in October. I reiterate that, due to the long hours, the health of the staff is being impaired.

I would not be a bit surprised if more than the Sergeant-at-Arms are indisposed or have to throw in the sponge if we continue sitting late hours for another week. We will then be obliged to obtain assistance for the remaining staff in order to carry on the administrative work of the House and keep the records up to date. Failing that we will have to adjourn Parliament for a week or so to allow these valuable and worthy officers, who are too valuable to be over-

worked, to recuperate and recover from their indisposition. If there was any strong reason why this House should sit so late—

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Pilbara is getting away from the Vote.

Mr. HEGNEY: I am deliberately trying to keep to the Vote, but I bow to your ruling, Mr. Chairman. Up to date I have simply expressed concern for Mr. Speaker, for yourself as Chairman of Committees, and for the staff, owing to the long hours that are being indulged in. My remarks have a definite relation to the Vote being discussed, because if the Sergeant-at-Arms remains away and if other officers are obliged to take time off, increased expenditure will be necessary, and we are dealing with the estimated expenditure. Am I not in order in referring to that aspect of the vote?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can deal with it only insofar as it affects the Vote for the officers concerned.

Mr. HEGNEY: Yes, and I am pointing out why, if the present course is pursued, our officers may be obliged to apply for leave in order to offset the long hours they are working in their onerous duties. Should that occur, Parliament might have to adjourn or seek extra assistance. Surely I am allowed to mention what in my opinion is the reason for the long hours. If there was any sound reason for what we are doing I would not rise to protest, but I believe it is simply to enable the member for Middle Swan—who recently joined the Liberal Party after saying he would never belong to any Party—and the member for Mt. Marshall, who is a Country Party member, to resign from the State Parliament in time to contest seats in the Federal election. I am very concerned about your health Mr. Chairman, and that of the staff as well as the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I draw the attention of the hon. member to Standing Order No. 144—

The Speaker or the Chairman, after having called the attention of the House or the Committee to the conduct of a member who persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition, either of his own arguments or of the arguments used by other members in debate, may direct him to discontinue his speech.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is that not over-ruled by the Interpretation Act?

The **CHAIRMAN**: The member for Pilbara has made all these statements before and repeated many made by the member for Roebourne. He must use other fresh matter on this Vote or I cannot permit him to continue.

Mr. HEGNEY: When one starts to pass a few comments on a Vote of this character and one is interrupted, one loses the thread of one's argument. I do not know that I am indulging in reiteration. It might seem monotonous to members of the Government if I were to reiterate why I believe the House is working long hours, but nevertheless it is true. However, I bow to your ruling, Mr. Chairman, but I say that the Government is not doing the right thing by forcing members of this House, and the staff, to work long hours.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.22]: I wish to support the remarks of previous speakers. We are just ruining the health of the staff, and I might say that the staff of this Assembly are being butchered to satisfy the vanity of two members of this Chamber. These two members have the idea that they want to become members of the Commonwealth Parliament and this Government is trying to get into recess to allow them to do so. I repeat that this practice is knocking around the health of the staff. As the member for Pilbara has said, the Sergeant-at-Arms is away ill. This man was taken to hospital the day after the Chamber had sat until 3 o'clock. He was half dead that night and in the morning he was taken away to hospital. He is not the only one who has been taken to hospital. One of the oldest members of the "Hansard" staff has also been in hospital for some days but has now been permitted to go home to recuperate.

We have still three months to go until Christmas and there is nothing to stop the Government from adjourning this Assembly before midnight every night. If we did that we would still finish well before Christmas. I protest against the staff and members being treated in this manner. The least the Government can do—although I suppose the Premier will not do it—is to treat members of the staff the same as other employees and pay them overtime. However, that would still not compensate

them for the ruination of their health. The staff are not like members. Members can go outside if they wish to do so. They can walk around and have a smoke and then come back and see how things are going. If they wish they can then go outside again. But the staff has to be on the qui vive all the time. They have to keep their noses on the grindstone at all times and they are not supposed to make any mistakes. I might add that in my history they have never made any mistakes, but this sort of treatment will cause them to make mistakes because they are not getting the rest they should.

I intend to have something to say about the "Hansard" staff when that item comes up. Just imagine a man writing all night and up until 6 o'clock in the morning. That is just ruining his health and it is up to the Government to show a little sympathy for these people if they do not show the same attitude to the Opposition. There is no necessity for all this rush and late sittings because we can still finish well before Christmas if we adjourn before midnight every night. To my knowledge we have never finished in September or October. The Premier knows that we always finish a week or two before Christmas. On one occasion we were working on Christmas Eve while the rest of the people were out night-shopping. Let us do things properly and give everything proper consideration. As they say about the Legislative Council, let us be a House of review and let us review the legislation that this Government is bringing down—if it has brought any down—and also review the Estimates that are now before this Chamber. There are many items that require review and even the miscellaneous portion of the Premier's Estimates needs to be examined. We should have reasonable time to discuss these Estimates, finish before midnight every night and still finish the session before Christmas. In that way we would not impair the health of members of the staff.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.26]: There are a number of items on this page about which I am quite curious. I am wondering whether the Premier when he speaks, can give some explanation. I have examined the various items and endeavoured to find reasons for

the differences in the amounts. There is provision for the Clerk of the Assembly; the expenditure for 1948-49 was £958 and the estimate for this year is £945. There is a reduction of £13. For the Clerk Assistant the expenditure last year was £724 and the estimate for this year is £721; a reduction of £3. The provision for the Sergeant-at-Arms is £397 as against an expenditure last year of £390. There is an increase of £7.

The Clerk of Records and Accounts shows an estimate of £615 as against an expenditure of £614 for last year. There is a difference of £1. However, the differences are so small in those cases that they accentuate the differences in the other cases and it makes me wonder why there is a reduction in some and an increase in others. If we take the provision for messengers it shows an expenditure last year of £229 and an estimate for 1949-50 of £378. There is a considerable increase for the same number of employees. The provision for the hall porter last year was £448 and for this year it is £454, or an increase of £6. Can the Premier indicate why there is no general trend throughout these figures? Instead of that, we are getting increases in some directions and reductions in others.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [5.30]: I am certainly not going to let the public get the idea that this Government is inflicting cruelty on the staff and is responsible for keeping them here all through the night into the early hours of the morning. The promise that full time would be given to members to air their grievances and to put forward their views is being kept. This Parliament will be in session just as long as other Parliaments have been.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That does not prove anything.

The PREMIER: All right; let me continue. The member for Roebourne, who used some extremely strong language, comes from the North, a country where crocodiles abound, so he knows something about crocodile tears, and that is what he has been shedding tonight.

Mr. Rodoreda: There are no crocodiles in my country. Your geography is well out. They are a thousand miles away from my electorate.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows all about them and also about crocodile tears. This debate on the Budget has been proceeding for over 47 hours.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Is that all?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Not one hour per member!

The PREMIER: The Commonwealth Government meets Parliament tomorrow, and it expects to finish the session in a month and the Prime Minister is bringing down a tremendous Budget, compared to mine. He is going to conclude his whole session in a month, and that Parliament contains more members by far than this one.

Mr. Rodoreda: Yes, and has all the year to sit.

Mr. Graham: It meets day and night.

The PREMIER: But the Prime Minister does not give every member an opportunity to speak as long as he desires.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the Premier should discuss that aspect on some other occasion.

The PREMIER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I agree. But I am trying to reply to remarks by members who have already spoken. I suppose I am in order in replying to questions raised by members?

The CHAIRMAN: Only so far as it affects this item. I prefer that the Premier should reply on some other occasion.

The PREMIER: Criticism having been offered and permitted, to a certain extent, I would like to be able to reply to it, without getting away from the subject under discussion.

Mr. Rodoreda: Have another session with an Address-in-reply.

The PREMIER: If members are so concerned about the health of the officers of this House, about which we all ought to be concerned, I am puzzled to know why they took five hours and four and a half hours to make their speeches. Not much consideration was shown for those who had to work then, Mr. Chairman! Very seldom have speeches of such length been delivered in this Chamber. Members who have spoken might give reasons why they took so much time.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Premier might give reasons why he wants to sit so late.

The PREMIER: The Government has the right to get its business through in a reasonable time. This Parliament is getting the same amount of time as other Parliaments have had.

Mr. Rodoreda: When are we going to finish?

The PREMIER: Surely the Government has a right to bring forward its legislation, to be dealt with reasonably by the Opposition. I am quite willing to take on the Leader of the Opposition and ask the people whether this is a reasonable attitude; whether they consider a five-hour speech and a four and a half hour speech are reasonable. Personally, I do not, and I will be able to convince the public of that fact. I am certainly going to try hard to accomplish that.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Is that a threat or a promise?

The PREMIER: A threat or a promise has been made to me this evening that the debate tomorrow will continue for 24 hours.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It ought to be for 48 hours if you move the motion.

The PREMIER: Whilst I am only too glad to hear concern expressed for the health of the officers of this House, I wish the hon. member had taken a broader view and voiced some concern for Ministers.

Mr. Graham: Provide for them in the Vote.

The PREMIER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that the administrative part of political life is more—

Point of Order.

Mr. Hegney: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman! I was refused permission by you to refer to matters outside a particular Vote, but now the Premier is dealing with the health of Ministers. I want to know whether he is in order or not.

The Chairman: I do not intend to let the Premier continue further. He did reply to statements made by members of the Opposition, but the Premier will have to confine himself to the Vote under discussion.

Debate Resumed.

The PREMIER: The Government and I have a keen desire to sit during reasonable hours, and we do not want to overwork the staff, if possible. I ask members to adopt

a reasonable attitude. Let us get on with our work and I can assure the House that the health of the officers will receive every consideration; I do not propose to go any further. The member for North-East Fremantle has raised one or two questions on the Vote under discussion. The increases would be accounted for by normal salary adjustments in the basic wage. Also there were 27 pay days in 1948-49 and I think that provides the answer to the queries raised by the hon. member.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [5.58]: The staff of this House prepare the proceedings of the House. They are then sent in typewritten form to the Government Printer, and the following day we receive a printed copy of the Votes and Proceedings of the preceding day. Anyone who cares to study that printed copy for Tuesday last and the one for Thursday last will find that on each day's sitting at least one member of the Opposition, before midnight on each occasion, moved to report progress on the Estimates in order that the Committee might adjourn. On each occasion, the move made by the Opposition in the interests of the staff and the Ministry was defeated by Ministers and their supporters.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [5.59]: I think I should have something to say in reply to the Premier's remarks. He suggested that members showed little concern for the staff because of the length at which they spoke during the general debate on these Estimates. On behalf of the Opposition, I can assure the staff that it is not our wish that they be called upon to continue their duties, not only through the day, but through all hours of the night. In other words, they are working almost continuously. But this state of affairs has been brought about by the action of the Government. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just pointed out that we have regard for the staff, and for that and other reasons the Opposition has sought some respite, but the Government, which has the temerity to accuse us, has been responsible for that injustice. On Friday morning at 5 o'clock the Government was still insisting that the members of the staff of the Legislative Assembly should continue at their desks.

The Premier: Did you show much consideration by making a five-hour speech?

Hon. A. H. Panton: The hon. member spoke very slowly.

Mr. GRAHAM: There is, as the Premier knows full well, an explanation for that.

The Premier: I would like to hear it.

Mr. GRAHAM: Even up to 9.30 p.m. on Thursday it was perfectly well known that the Premier intended to complete the general debate on the Estimates and to proceed to items on the Vote. He did not care a straw whether the staff was kept here until 3, 6 or 10 o'clock the following morning. The Premier knows that to be so.

The Premier: You did not appear to.

Mr. GRAHAM: It is apparently quite in order when the Premier decides that the staff and members must work all night; but when some other member—and after all the Premier is only one of 50—decides to make arrangements, all the fault in the world is to be found with them.

Mr. Bovell: This sounds like a tale from "Alice in Wonderland."

Mr. GRAHAM: We get some extraordinary results every time the member for Sussex opens his mouth, but we are saved a great deal; he, knowing so little about everything, only lets us hear from him infrequently.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for East Perth tried to get progress reported before he spoke.

The Premier: That does not give him any excuse for a five-hour speech. He cannot justify it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: Mr. Chairman, I will not have it said that there was deliberate action on my part to keep the staff engaged at their work all night. The Premier is well aware of the reason for it. There was no Address-in-reply debate and consequently members were deprived of the opportunity to make two speeches. Therefore, in common with my colleagues, I had to combine two speeches and deliver them as one. Had I not taken the advantage, I did, I would have been deprived of the opportunity, because the Premier has intimated this evening that when a

particular hour on a particular day is reached, the remainder of the Estimates will be put to the vote. It was fortunate that I did avail myself of the opportunity to make my speech, because obviously my rights as a private member are going to be denied me.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for East Perth is getting a long way from the Vote.

Mr. GRAHAM: This all arises from the Premier's statement that some action of mine was responsible for keeping the staff working inordinate hours.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Even after you concluded your speech the Government would not agree to progress being reported.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is what I said earlier. Talk about crocodile tears! The Premier knows why the staff were not allowed to go home after they had done a full day's work.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He is a slave driver.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Premier will recall having made what I suggest is a most disorderly interjection to the effect that some words of mine were costing £100.

The Premier: More than that. I should think I was a long way out.

Mr. GRAHAM: So far as I am aware, neither the clerks of the Assembly nor the "Hansard" reporters are paid overtime. Consequently, there could not be any augmentation of the items of salaries in the Estimates. Their salaries remain the same whether the House sits for half an hour, a day, or a day and a half. Needless to say, the Premier's interjection received some Press publicity and the public might possibly draw a wrong conclusion from it.

Mr. Ackland: How much would the printing cost?

The CHAIRMAN Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: That is not the point. It was the intention of the Premier earlier that evening to continue sitting all night in any event.

The Premier: No.

Mr. GRAHAM: Had it not been the remarks of the member for East Perth, it would have been the remarks of some other member. As I have previously informed members on the ministerial bench, so long as I have rights as a private member, I will

not be kicked from pillar to post. It was only in deference to the staff that I curtailed my remarks, as I had material sufficient to keep me going for several hours longer. So many things have been neglected by the Government and so much has it botched the people's business, that one could speak for an indefinite period on those subjects.

I notice that the Clerk of the Assembly is to receive £945, plus £100. It is my opinion that the members of our staff should be paid overtime or be given some other consideration, because it is inhuman to expect them to work for these long periods; but if there is real necessity for it—which I do not dispute—then I think there should be some monetary recompense given them. By way of comparison, it surely appears ludicrous that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly should receive approximately £80 per annum more than a member of Parliament. After all, the salary of a member of Parliament is a gross one, as it was reliably and conservatively estimated that about £300 of it covers unavoidable expenses. There seems to me to be some lack of balance. I do not want it to be thought for a moment that I consider the salary paid to the Clerk of the Assembly should be reduced.

Mr. May: We should be brought up to him.

Mr. GRAHAM: I want to establish beyond any question that if members in making protests throw additional work upon the staff, that is because of the deliberate action of the Government in denying members the opportunity of expressing their views. Why? Because the elections take place next year and this is the final opportunity we have of exposing the weaknesses of the Government and, goodness knows, there are enough of them.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Joint House Committee, £10,950—agreed to.

Vote—Joint Printing Committee, £10,399:

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.51]: I think that this is a more appropriate time at which to deal with the overworked members of the staff than in the discussion on the previous Vote. If

there are any persons in this place who are at a considerable disadvantage when the Assembly is sitting late, it is the members of the "Hansard" staff. I was careful to observe the other evening the eyes of the Chief Hansard Reporter when I saw him standing at the end of this Chamber, and literally they were almost dropping out. That is to be expected because of the concentration required of him when the Assembly is working at the pressure at which it was working last week. It is no good the Premier endeavouring to blame the Opposition for the long hours because the Government is in control of the Committee and it can determine the length of hours that will be worked by any of the employees.

The Government resolutely refused to stop at a reasonable hour and if the debate was carried on into the morning, as it was, it was no fault of the members of the Opposition, who endeavoured time and again to have progress reported. The Premier had set his mind on making a certain amount of progress with his Estimates, no matter how long it took; and in making that decision, he did so without any consideration whatever for the burden that would be imposed on the servants of the Assembly, who had to work at high pressure during that time. Members were free to move about. They could have a spell outside and rest. Some members of the staff were also able to do that; but the members of the "Hansard" staff were not so able and had to work hour after hour at a task which requires the utmost concentration and attention, without any respite whatever.

In bringing about a set of conditions like that, the Government was very culpable and it cannot escape responsibility by referring to long speeches made on this side. I probably made the longest speech I have ever made on the Estimates since I have been in this place. I think I spoke for 2¾ hours; but I defy the Premier or anybody else to show me a sentence of repetition, or to point out matter in that speech that was used purely for filling. The subjects with which I dealt were matters I had been saving up until such time as Parliament opened to give me an opportunity of making my criticism. Had it not been for the fact that I deliberately deferred for consideration

during the discussion of departmental Estimates a good deal of the material I had at my disposal, my speech would have been many times longer than it was. No man deliberately sets out to talk for an inordinate length of time just for the sake of talking.

The Premier: I do not think you do, but some men do. There is no doubt about that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Speaking for myself, I refer to the fact that I spoke for $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours, at the end of which time my throat was not in a very good condition at all; and I did not do it in order to obstruct the Government. I am very concerned about the motion of which notice was given this afternoon, because a good deal of the material I had available and would have been entitled to use in the general debate, I will not now be able to use. The Government has deprived members of the opportunity to offer fair criticism, by eliminating the Address-in-reply. That was a most unfair action to take, and was one which the Premier endeavoured to explain by saying that ample opportunity would be given to members to deal with various items during the discussion on the Estimates. I would ask the Premier whether it is giving members ample opportunity to require them to speak in the early hours of the morning.

The Premier: Your Government has done that in the past, too.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Never in August or September, but only at the end of the year, when it became apparent that otherwise it would be impossible to finish before Christmas.

The Premier: And they have applied the gag as well.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No.

The Premier: Yes! I will show you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The gag has never been applied in my time.

The Premier: It has been applied in my time. I will prove it.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Your Government did it—the Mitchell-Latham Government.

The Premier: No, it did not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We will have an opportunity tomorrow to debate that aspect fully; and as the Premier has sought a brawl, he will probably get it.

Mr. Graham: Too right he will!

The Premier: He can take it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: For the time being I am dealing with the aspect of whether any responsibility for overworking the staff can be placed on the Opposition. I say very deliberately that the Government is in charge of the Committee and can at any time decide when proceedings shall be concluded. Even though the debates might have been prolonged by members speaking at greater length than usual, that did not mean that the Government had to stay here, because the action that the Government proposes to take tomorrow was open to it, if it was so minded, at any time. It would not have hesitated to take that action if it had so desired. So not a single argument can be advanced in support of the Government's claim that the Opposition was to blame for overworking the staff. A reference to the records will show that numerous attempts were made by members on this side to have progress reported; and had the Government agreed, we would not have had the position that the members of the "Hansard" staff were worked to such an extent that their eyes were bloodshot, and one could not help but feel sorry for them.

But what could we do about it? Of course we could have thrown in the towel and said to the Government, "You are heartless, but we are not, and we will go home, although we think we should not, in order that the 'Hansard' staff may be given a fair deal." But I think the responsibility was on the Government to take that step, because it was in control. But it did not do so because the Premier had determined that, come what might, he would conclude his Estimates at that sitting. Of course, he did not do so. If he had brought some concentration to bear beforehand, he would not have been so foolish as to anticipate that he could do it. I would not agree that in any circumstances the Government is justified in sitting at such late hours at this part of the session, when several months still remain.

We have had no frank explanation from the Government as to why it must finish the session in September. I saw a sort of excuse in "The West Australian" once that the Premier was anxious to give members of the State Parliament an opportunity to assist in the Federal election. We are not in the kindergarten class, but that was a kinder-

garten explanation. To give members of the State Parliament an opportunity to assist in the Federal election! For that reason the Government dispenses with the Address-in-reply and tries to close Parliament in September, even though it kills members of the "Hansard" staff in the process. That is where we are; but, I repeat, without any sound explanation from the Government at all! We know the reason, of course. There are two members supporting the Government who, because of the action of the Government may find themselves in the position of being without seats.

So it all comes back to actions taken by this Government being responsible for the staff of "Hansard" being overworked. Are we to be blamed for this state of affairs? The Government cannot escape the blame in the slightest degree. It took the initial action to bring about a redistribution of seats which has deprived two members of their opportunity of sitting in this Assembly, so they determined to have a shot at the Commonwealth Parliament. That determination put the Government in a spot, and the Government in an effort to extricate itself from the dilemma, decided to dispense with the Address-in-reply. It rode roughshod over the rights of members, but that does not matter. It then rushed legislation through—such legislation as it has seen fit to bring down. It has broken pledges all over the place. We should have had a vermin Bill long ago.

Because of the limited amount of legislation, there should be ample opportunity, if the Premier were reasonable, to allow of a proper consideration of the Estimates; and, let me say, a consideration made more difficult again by the action of the Government. We were promised financial tables to help us in the discussion. They are still coming along. I suppose we shall get them after the gag has been applied and we can no longer discuss the Estimates. That is a fine way to keep faith with the Assembly. So I say, no matter what argument the Government uses in an endeavour to fasten the responsibility on members of the Opposition, it cannot get away with it. We can find reason after reason for the set of circumstances which arose last week, and which we are likely to have again this week with the same result, namely, the members of the "Hansard" staff being literally worked to

death. I remind the Premier that there is still most of September, all October, and all November. He can have December off, if he likes, and even then he will be rising a month earlier than usual.

There is no need to rush the business through with this haste, irrespective of the result on the officers of the House who have to go about their work without being in a position to utter a single protest, so far as we know. I assume, however, that being only flesh and blood they must have been worked up to some extent last week, and I would not be at all surprised if some indication has not been given to the Premier that the staff cannot stand up to the job. I know what I would have done if I had been the Chief "Hansard" Reporter. I would have told the Premier straight out that I would not guarantee that the staff could work at that pressure if it continued for another week. Whether or not that has been done, I cannot say; I have not the slightest idea. But it would have been done if I had been the Chief "Hansard" Reporter because, in my opinion, it is completely out of the question to expect men to work at that pressure all the way through. The Premier had it in his own hands to terminate the proceedings at any time he liked. He could have agreed quite readily to the motions moved from this side, that progress be reported, but he turned a deaf ear to them and used his majority to keep the House sitting, irrespective of the condition that the servants were in as a result of the work. I hope we will not have a repetition of it. I trust the Premier will have sense enough, when he gets up against a brick wall, not to try to poke his head through it as he has done in recent days.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [6.4]: I do not want to repeat what I said previously, but I would say to the member for North-East Fremantle that I make this appeal to the Opposition to adopt a reasonable attitude towards the Budget, generally. I do not consider a reasonable attitude has been adopted during the time it has been under discussion.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What is your definition of the word "reasonable"?

The PREMIER: I will tell the hon. member that. The Budget has been under discussion for more than 47 hours, so members have had a pretty fair opportunity to express themselves. I have come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when a time limit should be put on speeches of members. The hon. member expressed concern for the officers of the House. I think he might also have included the printing staff who have tried to keep up with the printing under difficult conditions such as blackouts, loss of power; etc. But it is just impossible to keep up with the printing, and to provide the financial statements which the hon. member requires and which he should have.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: And which you promised.

The PREMIER: Yes. Since that promise, however, we have had a disastrous strike which has played the very mischief with everything, including our printing office. I do not think our printing office will ever keep up with the Parliamentary work if we are going to have speeches of the duration of those to which we listened last week.

Mr. Hoar: You brought that on yourself.

The PREMIER: No, I did not. I still say that members have had every opportunity to express themselves. Let us look at the Budget! Is there a need for these long speeches? We have the departmental Estimates where matters concerning a particular department can be discussed far more effectively than in a general debate. We have items, and members can speak on individual items. The actual Budget Speech is one, I believe, during which the financial affairs of the State should be discussed—

Hon. A. H. Pantou: You told us we could use the debate on the Estimates instead of the Address-in-reply.

The PREMIER: The hon. member and his colleagues have taken full advantage of that. When I made that promise I never expected that we would have to listen to speeches of a duration of four or five hours.

Mr. Styants: It was more than a promise. It was an invitation.

The PREMIER: I will not let the member for North-East Fremantle get away

with the charge that it is the Government that is responsible for keeping the staff here until all hours.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If the Government had agreed, we would have gone home at a reasonable hour on Thursday night.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Votes and Proceedings prove it.

The PREMIER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, being a wily campaigner, took advantage of something that he saw would be in his favour but, as he well knows, when he was on this side of the House he often kept us here late at night. I have on a number of occasions had the experience of being here very late at night.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: That was essential.

The PREMIER: It depends upon which side of the House one is.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It was only once in a while.

The PREMIER: The member for North-East Fremantle cannot get away with the statement that the Government is responsible—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But it is.

The PREMIER: The Government is anxious to get its programme through.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why?

The PREMIER: I make no secret of it, and I do not care who knows it. Surely the Government has the right to put through its legislative programme, but I do not think the Opposition has the right simply to obstruct, and I think I am justified in using that term. We will leave it to the people to decide whether four or five-hour speeches are not designed to obstruct.

Mr. McCulloch: It is democracy.

The PREMIER: That sort of thing is not democracy. It is a decided weakness in our Parliamentary system. I will not apologise for the briefness of the legislative programme that has been introduced. If I have the privilege of leading the Government in the future, I say that the less legislation it brings down the better it will be for the country—

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I was not permitted to finish what I was saying. This country is not suffering from under-legislation, but from over-legislation.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is suffering from more than that.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: When a Government promises to bring in legislation it ought to do so.

The PREMIER: I again appeal to the Opposition to adopt a reasonable attitude, and I shall certainly do all I can to give the staff of this House every consideration.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [6.10]: It has been interesting to listen to the Premier during this debate. Speaking to a previous Vote I expressed my concern for the health of the staff and I feel I am entitled to resent the Premier, during his reply, having quoted my remarks as resembling crocodile tears. The Premier knows very well that all the time I have been in this House I have been sincere in all I have said. I have never used propaganda for propaganda's sake and the Premier well knows that what I did was the only method of uttering my protest against the action of the Government. I am in full accord with the member for North-East Fremantle in his expression, on this Vote, of concern for the health of the staff. The Premier says the Government has the right to get its legislation through, irrespective of Parliament or of the time it takes. There is a greater right than the right of the Government or of Parliament; it is the right of the private member to have all the time that the Standing Orders give him in which to express his views. I have heard members now on the front Government Bench express the same sentiments, when they were on this side of the House. They said there was too much government by Ministers and that the rights of private members had been filched from them year after year. Here is a further example of it.

The Premier denied that he or his Government is responsible for keeping the "Hansard" staff here till all hours of the morning, night after night and week after week, at what is practically the beginning of the session. Almost every hour throughout the night members of this side of the House have moved that progress be reported, but the Premier has been adamant, as was the Deputy Premier before him. We had a fortnight of this before the Premier returned from the Eastern States, and the "Hansard"

staff has been in top gear for nearly a month now. What could we do about it? The Premier was thunderstruck when he returned to this State and found that the General Estimates were not through, because he had arranged everything nicely before he went away. I might be in the Premier's corner if the Standing Orders were to be amended to put a time limit on speeches, but I would want the question discussed properly. I do not agree to its being done for the reason for which it is now being done—just to keep the Government in office. That is the only reason why the "Hansard" staff are being kept here till all hours of the morning. What is wrong with the Government keeping Parliament going until its business is done and, if members have to resign and the Government loses control, going to the country? Who is frightened of an election? Not the Government, surely.

The Premier: No.

Mr. RODOREDA: That is why the Government is taking such elaborate precautions to avoid an election before the normal time. The Government is solely to blame in this respect, yet the Premier comes here with his tongue in his cheek and blames the Opposition. On Thursday night I told the Premier that the general debate would not be ended before 4 a.m., if we were kept here, and he said he could not help it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. RODOREDA: The sole responsibility for keeping the "Hansard" staff here rests with the Government, no matter how it may deny it. I resent the Premier's reply to me when he questioned my motives in being concerned about the health of these people. It was not worthy of the Premier, because it was petty and undignified. Much the same can be said about the remark he passed the other evening in relation to the cost of the speech of the member for East Perth. That was petty and undignified, and unbecoming a man holding the high office of Premier of this State.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think the taxpayers think it was a petty remark.

Mr. RODOREDA: Responsibility is on the Government. What concern is it of private members of Parliament that two men are going to leave the Government? What does it matter to us if five men want

to leave it? Are private members to be stifled because of that occurrence? There can be no other reason for it. The Minister for Housing cannot give me any other reason and still be genuine about it. He can put up his tricky lawyer reasons, but they do not cut any ice with me.

The Minister for Housing: I do not think there has been any stifling.

Mr. RODOREDA: But there is going to be.

The Minister for Housing: No there is not.

Mr. RODOREDA: And there might have been before, had the Government had this brain wave earlier than it has. It is no use the Minister for Housing saying that we are not going to be stifled, because I am sure that we are.

The Minister for Housing: No.

Mr. RODOREDA: We are entitled to expect that this session shall continue till the middle of December at the earliest. Why should it concern us if the Government wants to finish on a certain date? Why is not the finishing date included in the motion of which the Premier gave notice this afternoon? We are entitled to be told that. I ask the Premier to include the closing date of Parliament in the motion, so that we shall know where we stand. I repeat that I am entitled to be concerned about the health of the "Hansard" staff and also their ability to do their work. There is absolutely no reason at all for this procedure to be adopted. Why should our normal routine be disrupted because two members of the Government Parties want to stand for the Federal election? To do this, the "Hansard" staff are kept here late at night.

The Estimates have always been left until the end of the session, but there is a definite reason for putting them on at this stage. The Government wants to close up early but it cannot do so until the Appropriation Bill has been passed. In order to have that done, the Estimates must be completed first. That is the reason for this "gag" motion and for keeping the "Hansard" staff here until all hours of the morning. The Premier says we are to blame for it. As the member for North-East Fremantle said, we have moved time and time again that progress be reported,

but the Premier would not agree. So we have had no alternative but to keep the "Hansard" staff here.

The Premier: Was consideration for the "Hansard" staff your only object in moving that progress be reported?

Mr. RODOREDA: No, it was not.

The Premier: No, it certainly was not.

Mr. RODOREDA: But the Premier has no consideration at all for "Hansard."

The Premier: My word, he has.

Mr. RODOREDA: Then he has not shown it, up to date. The Premier says that the Government has the right to finish its legislation. What legislation has it got? It has none at all. I say that private members have rights far transcending those of any Government. Why should the Government stifle criticism against it? It has been criticised, and it will still be criticised. The Government and the Premier are entirely to blame for this state of affairs. I hope the Premier will be more reasonable in future, and consider the health and well-being of the staff employed in this Chamber.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [7.35]: I think if we did what the Premier has asked us to do, and both sides were reasonable, we would go much further. When I say "reasonable," I mean reasonable, and it does not have to be one-way traffic, either. The Premier has evidently forgotten what happened last year, when he stifled us with the Estimates. Apparently he is going to stifle us again this year. On the last day last year, the Premier put through the Estimates for Native Affairs, Agriculture, Chief Secretary's Department, Public Works, Crown Law Department offices, Health, Forests, Child Welfare and Housing. They were all handled on the last night, and his excuse then was that Parliament was to be closed. If I remember rightly, the Premier made a promise on that occasion that this rushed business would not happen again. If the Premier would be reasonable and close each sitting at an early hour, he would be finished in plenty of time and some weeks before Christmas. Last year the closing day was the 10th December, and he put the Estimates for all those departments through on the one day. It appears that the Premier is to attempt to stifle us again this

year, as he did last year, only in a different manner. I hope the Premier will be what he has asked us to be; that is, reasonable.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [7.36]: When I spoke on the Estimates—before any of the long speeches had been made—I appealed to the Chamber to have some consideration for the staff, if not for members. We all know just what the Premier intended to do. He wanted to have an early session, rush through the Estimates and necessary Bills, and then go into recess. The whole business of Parliament is to be subordinated to the wish of two members who want to get into the Commonwealth Parliament. That is the whole purpose of the present procedure, and I think it is disgraceful. I see no reason why the business of Parliament should not proceed as it has done during other years and the session be completed just before Christmas. If that happened, the Premier knows he would have a minority. I suppose some members of the Government must have had a word or two with the Independents, and found out which way they would record their votes. Apparently they are not going to express independence, and certainly not in the way they were elected.

The **CHAIRMAN**: Order! The member for South Fremantle is a long way from the Vote.

Mr. FOX: I think the vote of the Independents would be a long way away, too.

The **CHAIRMAN**: That is no reason why the hon. member should be.

Mr. FOX: I do not intend to set a bad example, although in this instance the Premier has done so, but I would not want to follow in his footsteps.

Mr. May: You are not going to follow him?

Mr. FOX: I could not be in step with him, because that would be impossible. The Premier should give consideration and recompense to the hard-worked staff, and members of "Hansard" in particular. I know the Clerks of Parliament have to sit and listen to speeches, although they really need not listen unless they wish to. Their work is not as onerous as that of "Hansard," whose job I consider to be one of the hardest of all. They have to sit and take down reports of speeches all the evening, and then go out and dictate them. As soon

as that is done, they have to come back, usually within a very short time, and carry on again. After that, they must come back in the morning to do further work. They cannot lie in bed, as members of the House can. As well as that, several Select Committees are sitting at present, and I appeal to the Premier at least to let us get away early tonight.

The Premier: Let us get through my Estimates and we will see how we are going then.

Mr. FOX: The Premier has till Christmas to get through the Estimates.

The Premier: I am talking about the Premier's Estimates.

Mr. FOX: What does it matter if those two members resign?

The **CHAIRMAN**: Order! The member for South Fremantle has said that before and his remarks are out of order on this Joint Printing Committee Vote.

Mr. FOX: I am only expressing the reason why the Premier is trying to go into recess as soon as possible.

The **CHAIRMAN**: I am not interested in that; I am interested only in this particular Vote.

Mr. FOX: I appeal to the Premier even at this late hour to listen to reason. He has asked the members of the Opposition to be reasonable, so let him show some reasonable attitude towards the hard working members of the "Hansard" staff.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [7.41]: It has occurred to me that there can be some slight alteration made in the setting out of the Parliamentary debates. The alteration I propose would be of advantage not only to members themselves but also to other people who read "Hansard." I notice that in the Commonwealth "Hansards," at the top of each page the title of the Bill being debated is set out and also the name of the speaker appears at the foot of each page.

The Premier: Is that the Commonwealth "Hansard"?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes. Where a speaker has made a reasonably long and uninterrupted address to the House there is no indication in our "Hansard" pages as to who the speaker is. For instance, I have

before me two pages of our "Hansard" and there is no indication on them as to whom is making the speech. That may apply to half a dozen pages of our "Hansard" and I think it would be of assistance if the name of the speaker were printed at the foot of each page, and the title of the Bill also indicated. I realise it would entail a little more work for the Government Printer but if it would facilitate the reading of the debates I think some attention should be given to my suggestion.

The Premier: I will do so.

Mr. GRAHAM: I desire to compliment the "Hansard" staff on executing its most exacting and onerous task. On occasions members are not quite as orderly as they might be and as a consequence the reporters have to take down facts and figures, very often during a running fire of interjections, and with undercurrents of conversation going on and other disturbing factors. When we have protracted sittings, then they have to keep up to the mark not only in taking down verbatim what is being said and then by dictating it to the typists, but also in checking it which all means that they have anything but an enviable task. It might be thought that members, particularly on this side of the House, show scant consideration for the members of the "Hansard" staff in view of the fact that not only in this session but also in previous sessions—in fact to a far greater degree than in the present session—long speeches have been made.

Without any Party bias whatever I think the Government should realise that His Majesty's Opposition is officially recognised, and it should be appreciated by everyone that the session immediately prior to an election is the one when the Government is seeing out its parliamentary run. After all, when the first session was held—I point out that this is only the second session—this Government had been in office for only a few short months and therefore to a great extent, as the Premier and other members will notice from the first speech I made following the accession of the Government to the Treasury bench, I did not indulge in any criticism of the Government realising that it had had very little opportunity to give effect to its policy and plans. But after the passing of two and a half years it is a totally different proposition. There

are many things—I do not intend to cite them—undone by this Government that require and required attention long ere this. In addition, the Government has done all sorts of things contrary to public interest. It stands to reason that if we are to ventilate our viewpoints then the "Hansard" reporters must necessarily have an extremely difficult task in noting down all our complaints and comments.

I do not want to be accused of repetition, but there is a plethora of long speeches now for the reason that all of us have been denied the opportunity of speaking in general terms on the Address-in-reply and that right was exercised by the great majority of members. Therefore, it is a great pity that the "Hansard" staff, instead of having 30 or 40 members addressing themselves to matters of public interest in two instalments, have had to report the speeches in one large lump, and there is no-one to blame for that other than the Government. After all, the supporters of the Government, including the members for Geraldton and Beverley shedding crocodile tears up to their waists or higher, were lamenting the fact that private members had very few rights; expressed extravagant terms about dictatorship by Cabinet, denial of their rights and so on. Each of us was more or less elected equally to this Chamber—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for East Perth cannot continue in this vein in speaking to this Vote.

Mr. GRAHAM: No, Mr. Chairman, except to say that we were elected more or less equally for the purpose of expressing the viewpoint of the people, which expressions are taken down and placed in the permanent records of the Parliamentary archives. I represent twice as many people as do more than half the Government's supporters.

The CHAIRMAN: This has nothing whatever to do with the Joint Printing Committee. The hon. member must get back to this Vote.

Mr. GRAHAM: I thought there was a definite connection between my remarks, which have to be taken down by the "Hansard" reporters, on account of the representatives of the people—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member's remarks are beyond the limits of this Vote and he will have to take some other opportunity to make them.

Mr. GRAHAM: We have certain obligations, as a consequence of which the "Hansard" reporters have to perform their duties and instead of carrying them out during reasonable periods, say, from 4.30 p.m. till 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., they must perforce, because of the Government's plans, work till the early hours of the morning. I do not think the last has been heard of that phase. If the Government had some concern for the welfare of the staff of Parliament, surely it could arrange its business in such a way as not to provoke Opposition members and so as to give the "Hansard" staff, in common with the rest of the parliamentary staff and members of Parliament generally, an opportunity to carry out their duties in a proper way.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Joint Library Committee, £340:

Mr. FOX: I have a suggestion to make with regard to the library and it is that the librarian go through the books and select some that could be handed over to schools. It might be a fairly big task and I do not suggest that more work should be imposed upon him at the present time; but very soon Parliament will be in recess, and he could possibly attend to the matter then. There are many interesting books that a large number of children, particularly those in the higher classes, would appreciate. I have in mind, for instance, the books by H. V. Morton. The subject-matters dealt with are most interesting and historical and would make excellent reading for the children.

There must be many books in the other sections of the library that could be dealt with similarly. There are those dealing with insect life. I do not think many of them are taken out by members. I have looked through several of them at times and they always seem to be in the same position. Then there are travel books. The librarian could possibly censor them to see whether they contained anything harmful to young people, but I do not think he would have any trouble in that respect. Those books are hardly ever taken down from the shelves.

They deal with native customs, the hunting of wild animals in Africa and other countries, and so on. If this task would involve too much work for our excellent librarian, we could probably provide another £100 a year in order that he might have some assistance. Failing that, we could raise the salary of the librarian. I hope the Government will give some consideration to the suggestion.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Premier's Department, £21,425:

Item, Assistant Under-Secretary, £773.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Estimates show that the Assistant Under Secretary's salary for 1948-49 was £843 whereas the estimate for the current financial year is £773, a difference of £70. As that is a substantial decrease, I would like some explanation.

The PREMIER: The explanation is much the same as I gave the hon. member with reference to the position of officers of Parliament. Despite the increase in the basic wage, the fact that there will be 26 pay days this year as against 27 last year will result in decreased expenditure.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier cannot get away with that explanation this time. He did so before because he had no way of checking the item. Does the Premier suggest that this officer is paid £70 a fortnight? That is what he is endeavouring to tell me. There will be only one additional pay day and that would not account for a reduction of £70, which would mean that the officer is in receipt of £35 a week. If he were paid that, it would represent a much larger salary than £773 a year.

The PREMIER: The lesser payment will make a difference of £30 in the officer's salary.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I do not think he gets £30 a fortnight.

The PREMIER: I will let the hon. member know. I do not think the Assistant Under Secretary is likely to suffer any injustice by way of reduction in salary. The hon. member need have no fear in that direction.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But we are entitled to know.

The PREMIER: Yes, and I will let members know.

Item, Royal and other Commissions of inquiry, £1,000.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am pleased to see it is anticipated that for the current year £1,000 only will be spent on Commissions of inquiry as against an actual expenditure for 1948-49 of £5,483.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Parliament will not be sitting.

Mr. GRAHAM: No, but there is an Honorary Royal Commission sitting now and presumably that will involve some expense. I would like to know something about the Royal Commission on Betting. The three Commissioners spent considerable time investigating the question under, unfortunately, restricted terms of reference, at a cost of £1,824 5s. 2d. In those circumstances it was to be anticipated, following upon the report of the Royal Commission, that some legislation would be introduced dealing with the problem. No-one will gainsay the fact that S.P. betting is just as popular and prevalent today as ever before. Unfortunately, the persons who invest a few shillings on a Saturday afternoon are being prosecuted, whilst others who go to some spot with a fence around it and called a race-course go free. Betting is just as illegal there.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for East Perth cannot go beyond the scope of the Royal Commission under this item.

Mr. GRAHAM: I was attempting to show how prevalent is this social evil—as it is sometimes termed—and how the Government at the last election led the public to believe that it intended to deal with the matter. The Government established its bona fides by appointing a Royal Commission which cost a considerable sum of money, but I have not noticed that it has taken any legislative action. Will the Premier indicate—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am not going to allow the Premier to discuss past Royal Commissions on this item. This is an estimate.

Mr. GRAHAM: I doubt whether the Committee is justified in agreeing to the provision of £1,000 for the present year.

What plan has the Premier in mind in view of the recommendations of the Royal Commission? Was the Commission a face-saving device, or was the Government playing up to the gallery?

Mr. FOX: The Government has been prodigal in making expenses available to certain Royal Commissions, but it has been exceedingly parsimonious in its allowances to members of Select Committees and honorary Royal Commissions. I was a member of a Select Committee which travelled from Perth to Albany and from Esperance to Geraldton and motorcars were then noticeable by their absence.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for South Fremantle is getting away from the item.

Mr. FOX: Would I be in order in referring to the Fisheries Select Committee? The Government had no intention of implementing any of the recommendations of this Select Committee, as was made fairly clear by the Minister for Fisheries when he agreed to the appointment of the committee. In future, no Select Committee or Royal Commission should be appointed unless the Government has decided to implement the recommendations made by it, otherwise it is a sheer waste of time and money. These inquiries put a lot of extra work on to the "Hansard" reporters; reams of paper are filled up, but its only use would appear to be as fuel for bath-heaters.

The PREMIER: The reports of other Royal Commissions in the past have not been acted upon, but that does not necessarily mean that they were valueless. Inquiries into betting are being made in other parts of the British Commonwealth and the Government is awaiting the conclusions arrived at. The member for South Fremantle suggested payment to members of Select Committees.

Mr. Fox: No, be a little more liberal with them. They get only a little now.

The PREMIER: I think it was this Government—I am quite willing to be corrected—which did provide certain expenses.

Mr. Fox: The last Government did.

The PREMIER: No. There was no provision then.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They got expenses back in 1925.

The PREMIER: I think the member for Leederville is right.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I am always right.

The PREMIER: We did make provision for certain expenses for members, but there is the danger that if a member receives payment for this work he will lose his seat. That aspect has to be taken into consideration.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I hope the Premier will reply to the point raised by the member for East Perth. He is particularly interested in the provision of £1,000 for the Royal Commission on betting.

The Premier: It was £1,290.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: The Committee is entitled to some explanation of this expenditure. What has been done about the report and what action does the Government intend to take?

The PREMIER: The report of this Royal Commission was tabled and all members had an opportunity to peruse it. It is not a matter of its being pigeon-holed. I said just now that information was collated and presented which is not lost.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Not lost, but just buried.

The PREMIER: The Government was not prepared to act on the information obtained and the recommendations made by the Commission. I do not know, Mr. Chairman, how far you will let me go in this matter.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the Premier has gone as far as I can allow him to.

Member: That is as far as he wanted to go!

The PREMIER: No. I wanted to say something about broadcasting, etc., but I cannot. All I can say, if I am so restricted, is that the expenditure incurred by this Royal Commission—

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Was just a waste of money.

The PREMIER: No. Certain information has been obtained, and Commissions of a similar nature have been held in other parts of the British Empire.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: What has that to do with Western Australia?

The PREMIER: It has something to do with Western Australia. Betting is the same problem in other countries.

The CHAIRMAN: The Premier is not entitled to discuss that.

Items, Ministerial and Parliamentary Visits and State Ceremonials (not including departmental visits), £5,300; Entertaining Distinguished Visitors, £750.

Mr. HEGNEY: I would like an explanation of these items. Is the reference to visits of Ministers from other States to this State or of visits of Ministers from this State to other States or both and, in addition, the entertainment of distinguished visitors? I have no quarrel with that. I think the State should entertain distinguished visitors from the Eastern States and from overseas—men in the scientific, industrial or political world—but I would like an outline of the basis on which certain visitors are entertained. Do particular organisations advise the Premier that certain individuals from overseas or from the Eastern States will be coming here; or do the visitors notify the secretary of the Premier's Department; or does the initiative lie with the Premier himself as to what distinguished visitors will be entertained? If so, can he give the type of distinguished visitor who is entertained?

The PREMIER: When distinguished visitors come to Western Australia, the Government is notified and the same procedure is being followed by this Government as has been followed by previous Governments. Last year, for instance, we had Lord Robinson of the British Forestry Commission, who is regarded as one of the foremost foresters in the world. He had a look at our forests and consulted our Conservator, and he was given a Cabinet luncheon at which the Leader of the Opposition was present. The Governor General of New Zealand also paid us a visit. Then there was Sir Patrick Abercrombie, the British town planning expert, the High Commissioner for Ceylon and the High Commissioner for Canada, Mr. Anthony Eden, and a delegation of Indian scientists. That is the class of person entertained.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Treasury, £48,109:

Items, Salaries and allowances, £43,029.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am not sure whether the Government's publicity officer is paid by the Premier's Department or the

Treasury Department, but I would like the Treasurer to give us some information about his activities over the year.

The PREMIER: This officer is attached to the Premier's Department and that has been the procedure in the past.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Do you use the word "attached" advisedly?

The PREMIER: His duties are to attend to publicity about which the Government gives him instructions.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I thought that under the heading of "Treasury" we might have some information in reference to questions that were put forward during the general debate on the Estimates. I pointed out then that the salaries of the staff of the Native Affairs Department had increased during the two-year term of this Government by approximately £20,000.

The Premier: Which item are you discussing?

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: Item No. 1. I wanted to know whether it was not the duty of the Treasurer to check the increased expenditure of every department and whether when he was introducing his Estimates—which, of course, he did not do—he would say why he agreed to this erroneous increased expenditure. Surely it is the duty of the Treasury officials to check these items and give to the Treasurer reasons for increased expenditure!

The PREMIER: This information can be given to the hon. member when the Estimates of the Native Affairs Department are under discussion.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: We do not want the information from the Minister for Native Affairs, but from the Treasurer.

The PREMIER: I have not any particular item here.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: You are the person responsible. You must approve the expenditure.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: What a slipshod Government this is!

The PREMIER: It is all very well for the hon. member to talk like that.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: You should know.

The PREMIER: This information can be given to the hon. member when the Minister for Native Affairs is dealing with this department.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: I want it from the Treasurer.

The PREMIER: That is the proper time to get the information.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: No, it is not.

The PREMIER: I have not any particular item dealing with it. Surely when the departmental Vote is being considered, is the time to obtain information such as the hon. member requires.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You might apply the gag.

The PREMIER: No. I will talk to the hon. member about that. I think he will find I will give him every opportunity for discussion.

Mr. BRADY: This item includes provision for the payment of £774 to an economics research officer as against £778 for 1948-49. Can the Premier tell us what are the duties of this research officer? Does he advise the Government in regard to economic trends and are his reports, if any are made to the Government, available to members?

The PREMIER: Mr. Lancaster is the officer referred to. He assists at the Treasury. I have forgotten the last important work he carried out.

The Minister for Lands: He prepared facts and figures for the Arbitration Court.

The PREMIER: If there is any particular matter on which the hon. member requires information, I shall try to obtain it for him.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Governor's Establishment, £4,102; Executive Council, £5—agreed to.

Vote—London Agency, £17,038:

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I always think that very little information is given to Parliament or to the public in respect to the activities of the Agent General in London, with the result that the idea becomes fairly general that the expenditure necessary to finance the London agency is not justified. For instance, we have had no worthwhile information made available to us this year, although I think the Treasurer did, when introducing the Estimates, make some refer-

ence to the matter. I am not necessarily asking the Treasurer to give us much information at the moment, but suggesting that he might give consideration to publishing in the newspapers a summary—it would have to be fairly brief, I agree—of the work carried out by the Agent General and his staff during, say, the last year or so. If that were done, the public would become much better informed as to the work done by the Agent General and we, as members of Parliament would have a much better appreciation of the great justification there undoubtedly is for the maintenance of this office to carry out vital work for Western Australia. It sees that the interests of the State are protected and advanced in respect to people who desire to come to Western Australia from Great Britain, and even from other parts of the world; and, in addition, it assists Western Australians in London from time to time.

Mr. HEGNEY: Would the Premier be good enough to give us some information, firstly, as to which officers of the Agent General's Department are Western Australians? I believe the secretary is. I would like to know whether any other members of the staff are Western Australians, or whether they are engaged in London. I presume the figures here are quoted in Australian currency. I would like to know whether the Agent General and his staff are paid the equivalent in English currency. Item No. 2 refers to cables, postages telephones, stationery and travelling and entertainment and other expenses. A little further down Item 7 deals with the Agent General's allowance for entertainment expenses and mentions the figure of £1,000. There are two separate items dealing with entertainment expenses.

Points of Order.

Mr. Hoar: On a point of order! Does the fact that the member for Pilbara is discussing Item No. 2 prevent any other hon. member for discussing Item No. 1?

The Chairman: That is so. If the member for Pilbara continues, the member for Nelson cannot discuss Item No. 1.

Mr. Graham: On a further point of order! The member for Pilbara rose to discuss Item No. 1. Is it permissible for the hon. member to roam over a whole series of items?

The Chairman: No. If any member objects and wants to discuss an earlier item, I will stop the member for Pilbara.

Committee Resumed.

Mr. HOAR: I did not want this Division to pass without making some reference to it, because I have been wondering for a good many years just what are the detailed activities of our London Agency. As far as I can gather, the officers there are the only representatives of this State in Europe. My only object in rising is to seek information. I believe Savoy House, London, is instrumental in assisting quite a number of migrants from England to come to this country. If the London office is limited to migrants from England, then I say its activities should be extended. Either sub-agencies should be created in some other countries of Europe which, today, have shifting populations looking for a place like Australia in which to dwell; or some officer should be appointed to the London Agency with full authority to move around to test the possibilities of migration from other countries. I think there is no greater problem confronting us today than that of peopling this country as quickly as we can. If our London Agency is responsible to us for the number of migrants who come here, then its activities should be extended to embrace other countries. I would like the Premier to give the Committee some details of the activities and responsibilities of the London Agency in matters affecting migration.

Mr. GRAHAM: I understand that the term of office of the present Agent General is almost up. I have endeavoured to ascertain the date of his appointment and its term, which I understand to be three years. I do not see where provision is made for expenses for the present Agent General to return to this State and a successor to proceed to London. The Premier might indicate whether Mr. Kitson is to continue in office for a further term or whether a successor is to be appointed. If Mr. Kitson is to return to Western Australia considerable expense will be involved in transporting him and his family, together with their furniture and personal belongings, to this State, and in sending the successor to London.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I support the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition regarding the activities of our

Agent General in London. Many people coming to this State are not au fait with our customs. I have had inquiries regarding pensions, for instance. I think more information about the activities of our Agent General in London should be published in the local Press.

The PREMIER: I will see what can be done about giving the activities of our London Agency more publicity, as suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. From the correspondence that I receive from the Agent General I am sure he is leading a busy life. Reports by visitors from England and from Western Australians who have returned from London express appreciation of the help and advice received from our London office.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is not in question.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. Reynolds: Mr. Kitson is doing a very good job.

The PREMIER: He is and his activities cover a wide field. Mr. Kitson has been doing everything possible to speed up the delivery of urgently needed locomotives, for instance, and has visited the firms concerned to that end.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I think we should hear more about it.

The PREMIER: I am endeavouring to tell the Committee about it. Mr. Kitson has also received a great deal of correspondence about speeding up the delivery of requirements for our power stations. This has necessitated his leaving London to see the directors of the firms concerned and discuss the matter with them on the spot, in order to press for the urgent delivery of these essential goods. He has also done a great deal with regard to the shipment of such vitally necessary items. Many calls are made on him by prospective migrants. He has a practical knowledge of Western Australia and is able to tell them of the conditions they will meet should they decide to come to this State. Mr. Kitson is always most helpful to Western Australians visiting England and has done a lot to assist them to obtain passages home. Many requests are made to Mr. Kitson, by relatives and friends of people already in this State, for assistance in getting them passages to Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Mr. Kitson himself was a successful migrant from Great Britain to Western Australia.

The PREMIER: That is so. We are doing all we can to give publicity to this State in London. Full advantage is being taken of opportunities to advertise. Exhibits of Western Australian produce, together with pamphlets, are being sent to London and a new cinema is being purchased for the screening of Western Australian films at Savoy House. Those are some of the activities of the Agent General. The Government has not given consideration to the appointment of a successor to Mr. Kitson and I am not prepared at this stage to say that there will be a successor. No financial provision is made for it.

Item, Agent General's allowance for entertainment expenses, £1,000.

Mr. HEGNEY: I come now to Subdivision No. 2, Contingencies, £9,488. Under this heading is "Agent General's Allowance for Entertainment Expenses, £1,000." I would like to know whether the payments are made in English or Australian currency, what labour is employed in our London office and whether members of the staff, apart from the Secretary, are Australian born people who have been sent to England to perform these duties.

The PREMIER: There is an increase of £191 in this item, which covers the general administrative costs of the Agency, such as stationery, postage, telephone, audit fees, insurance fees, etc.

Item, Fees for Inspection of Goods under Indent, £1,300.

Mr. STYANTS: The Vote for 1948-49 was £450 and the expenditure was £891. Could the Premier explain just what is covered by this item? The estimate for this year is over 100 per cent. higher than that of last year.

The PREMIER: There is an increase of some £400 over the actual expenditure of last year. The item covers expert technical examination of materials and depends entirely upon the quantity and value.

Mr. Styants: That is Government purchases in England?

The PREMIER: Yes, that is materials from England for Australia. We did have an officer at Home going into the question

of locomotives and we are having expert advice in regard to electricity. There are purchases which require expert and technical knowledge. They are covered by this item.

Item, Upkeep of Savoy House, £3,936.

Mr. HEGNEY: I presume that this item is to cover general expenditure in connection with the maintenance and running of Savoy House. I am not so anxious about the details of the expenditure but I am concerned about interviews by British people, and possibly others, with respect to possibilities of an assimilation into life in Western Australia. It is all bound up with the question of immigration, and I think this might be a proper place to ask briefly the relationship between the Commonwealth immigration officers and the Agents General for the different States. As far as I can ascertain, the Commonwealth has complete control over the immigration policy and over the immigrants who will be introduced into the States. I want to know what part our State representative plays in urging or inviting prospective immigrants to Western Australia. Having done that what authority has the Agent General or the State Government with respect to the number of people who will come to Western Australia? In other words, what authority determines the inflow of immigrants to Western Australia? Are immigrants being selected through the medium of the Agent General's office in London or has the Agent General, or the State Government, any authority with respect to immigration to Western Australia? Does the Commonwealth say that a certain number of immigrants must go to Western Australia and a certain number to the other States?

The PREMIER: Intending immigrants visit the Agent General's office for advice and information on Western Australia. Immigration is a matter for the Commonwealth and the general quota is fixed by the Commonwealth, as are State quotas. At a Premiers' Conference I did raise the question of a closer liaison between the State Agents General and Australia House, and suggested that we should have a representative at Australia House where immigrants could see him and he could express views as

to their suitability to come to Western Australia. That was not agreed to by the Commonwealth authorities.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We tried that out in 1946 and it was not agreed to.

The PREMIER: Yes. I understand there is now a better relationship between the Agent General's office and Australia House. The Agents General meet as a committee to discuss immigration generally and to advise in regard to the type of immigrant each State requires.

Item, Publicity and Exhibits, £1,000.

Mr. STYANTS: The estimated Vote for 1948-49 was £600 and there was an actual expenditure of £257. There is an anticipated expenditure for 1949-50 of £1,000, which is an increase of 120 per cent. Can the Premier outline the nature of the publicity and exhibits?

The PREMIER: Full advantage is being taken to advertise the State in London. A studio has been acquired for displaying exhibits of Western Australian produce, and pamphlets are being sent to London. Costs are higher than in pre-war years. A new cinema projector in being purchased for screening Western Australian films at Savoy House.

Mr. Styants: Money well spent.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Could the Premier tell us how many immigrants are coming to Western Australia?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Forrest is out of order in discussing that question on this item.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Public Service Commissioner, £4,803:

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Here is another Vote where the salary items show a wide discrepancy and I would like the Premier to give some explanation. Dealing with Item No. 1, the expenditure for the secretary for 1948-49 was £877. The estimate for 1949-50 is £802. That is a reduction of £75 on an amount of £877, which is substantial. Anticipating that we might have the argument of one pay period less, I looked further down the column and found, instead of decreases, that the other amounts all show increases. That rather

precludes the possibility of using such an explanation. There is an increase of £11 for the inspector and an increase of £54 for the four clerks. Of course, we cannot anticipate what temporary assistance will be required or how many people will be employed. Surely there must be some explanation for this substantial reduction on the Estimates this year as compared with those of last year. This man is a highly paid officer.

The Premier: There is an increase.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I cannot see it. And if so, there must be something wrong with my eyesight.

The Premier: I am sorry. You are correct.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We cannot accept the argument that there is one pay period less because if we did it would mean that the secretary would be on a salary of £950 which, of course, is out of all proportion.

The PREMIER: I am just trying to obtain this information for the hon. member before he leaves the House tonight. The only Vote I have is that the increases are on account of basic wage adjustments etc., and additional salaries for extra assistance, but that is not the information the hon. member desires.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That only further clouds the issue.

The PREMIER: I have sent away for the information and will supply it to the hon. member when it is received by me.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government Motor Car Service, £6,125:

Item, Foreman Mechanic in charge of Garage, £1,238 and Clerk £587.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I notice that the total estimate for these two employees is £1,825 which allows for a salary of £1,238 for the foreman mechanic whereas last year the total expenditure was only £1,261. It would appear from these figures that the foreman in charge has had a considerable rise in salary and, though I do not object to that, I hope the other mechanics in the garage have had their salaries raised accordingly.

The PREMIER: The increase is due to the provision of payment for long service leave on the retirement of the mechanic in charge, Mr. Geiger.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He has retired, has he?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Item, Wages and Overtime, £3,400.

Mr. McCULLOCH: Under this item I would like to know what number of vehicles is being attended to by the mechanics and the foreman in charge of this particular establishment.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The increase in the Vote will be for running Ministers around in preparation for the election.

The Minister for Lands: I like that!

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is what it is for.

The Minister for Lands: No, it is dirt. You made full use of them while you were a Minister.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If the cap fits—

Mr. McCULLOCH: The increase of £329 over the expenditure of last year indicates an increase in the number of mechanics employed.

The PREMIER: That increase is due to a rise in the basic wage. This item covers the wages and overtime for mechanics, chauffeurs, etc., under industrial agreements. The present staff consists of one mechanic, five drivers and one junior. I am unable to say what number of vehicles is attended to. Under Item No. 3 I can give some information to the hon. member if he so desires.

Item, Maintenance of Workshop, Motor Vehicles and Bicycles, and Hire of Cars for all Departments, £8,900.

Mr. HEGNEY: I assure the Premier and the Ministers that this question I propose to ask is not for the purpose of trying to trip them up. I want to know how many Ministers use Government-owned cars. In my opinion every Minister should have a car. My next question is: What are the conditions, if any, under which the Government motor garage will service a car owned by a Minister? Also, what cars, if any, are serviced by the garage apart from those owned by the Government or owned by the Ministers? I understand a few Ministers

use their own cars. I agree that they should get their cars serviced to the fullest extent by the garage, but I would like some information as to the conditions under which those cars are serviced or maintained.

The PREMIER: I understand that the present set-up of the Government garage has been the same over many years. A Minister who uses his own private car on ministerial work has it serviced by the garage and obtains his petrol from it. A Minister who uses a Government car, because he does not possess a car of his own, naturally has that car serviced by the garage. The Minister for Lands informs me that four Ministers are at present using their own cars.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I do not think he is right.

The Minister for Lands: The Attorney General, the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, the Minister for Housing and myself all use our own cars. The car belonging to the Leader of the Opposition is also serviced at the garage.

The PREMIER: Is that the information the hon. member desires?

Mr. Hegney: Yes, that is all I asked for. Vote put and passed.

Vote—Audit, £30,615—agreed to.

Vote—Compassionate Allowances, etc., £5,321:

Item 5, Widow of the late Constable Buzza, £118; Item 6, Widow of the late Detective Roe, £91.

Mr. STYANTS: I desire some information on these two items. I notice that the widow of Constable Buzza was to receive £66 for last year but for some reason she evidently received £100 and for this year the estimate is £118. However, in the next item the widow of Detective Roe was estimated to receive £95 and in fact received that sum last year, but this year it is proposed to reduce her allowance to £91. I would like to know why Constable Buzza's widow is getting an increase whilst Detective Roe's widow will suffer a decrease. Both their husbands died in the service of the Police Force, so why the differential treatment between the two widows?

The PREMIER: I am informed that general circumstances are considered and payments made accordingly.

Mr. May: There must be a means test.

The PREMIER: This item includes annual and also final payments. It is not possible to foresee the expenditure under this heading. Final payments principally represent allowances granted to widows and dependants of deceased officers and compensation allowances to persons injured. The item includes payments to three ex-officers whose pensions were very small and a compassionate allowance has been allowed in each case to bring them up to the maximum amount provided in the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, which is £130 per year.

Mr. STYANTS: The position is not clear from my point of view, because in one case the widow of the late Constable Buzza was given a compassionate allowance of £100 and that is to be increased to £118, whereas the widow of the late Detective Roe is to have her allowance reduced from £95 to £91. Unless there is a means test or, as someone suggested, a mean test in connection with the matter, some explanation is due respecting the differential treatment to these two widows whose husbands both died in the performance of their duties. I would like an explanation, possibly at some other time, to ensure that no injustice is being done.

The PREMIER: I understand that a discussion took place with the Police Union with regard to the late Constable Buzza and that the payment mentioned was arrived at. I will later give the hon. member a full explanation regarding both matters.

Item, F. W. Beale, £83.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: What is this payment for? There was no provision last year and the item appears for the current year. Is it an annual payment or what is the explanation?

The PREMIER: I am unable to give the hon. member any information. I have no note respecting it, and I will have to find out.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You need not bother.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Government Stores, £41,146—agreed to.

Vote—Taxation, £12,000:

Mr. RODOREDA: The Vote deals with the one item, which refers to a payment of £12,000 by the State to the Commonwealth for services in connection with the collection of State taxes. I will put a proposition to the Premier respecting which he can supply an answer without having to admit that he does not know, because it involves merely a matter of opinion. I think the amount paid is extraordinarily high for the comparatively minor service the Commonwealth renders in the collection of taxation. The Estimates for 1940, when the State imposed its own taxation and the Commonwealth did the collecting, show that the State paid £33,795 to the Commonwealth Government for collecting State taxation, which amounted to £2,373,000. The taxation collected comprised payments under various forms of tax. For the current financial year, we propose to pay £12,000 to the Commonwealth for the collection of taxation amounting to £312,000. The proportionate discrepancy is too great. The Premier should take the matter up with the Commonwealth Government and endeavour to have the payment cancelled altogether. I do not think, if the payment were cancelled, it would mean that one officer would lose his employment. As it is, it is merely a side line and pennies from heaven for the Taxation Department, in respect of the collection of a paltry amount of £300,000 in taxation.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is rather optimistic if he thinks I could get the item of expenditure cancelled altogether. During the last 2½ years I have had some experience in trying to get certain items of expenditure set aside. The amount on the Estimates is provided to cover the cost of collecting land and other Government taxes, not including the tax that is paid to the State under the uniform taxation arrangement. It includes salaries, rent of offices, travelling expenses and everything connected with the collection of taxation. I should imagine this figure had been arrived at only after consultation with the States and I do not think the Commonwealth would try to exploit us with regard to the collection of our taxes.

Mr. Rodoreda: Could not the State itself collect it much cheaper?

The PREMIER: I doubt it. We would have to set up our own office, provide the necessary officers and incur other expenses.

Mr. Rodoreda: If eight or 10 officials could not collect this paltry amount of £300,000, it is a poor lookout.

The PREMIER: I will look into the matter, but I do not think we have much to complain about.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Superannuation Board, £6,702:

Item, Typist, £340.

Mr. STYANTS: Will the Premier explain why this typist's salary has been increased from £165 to £340?

The PREMIER: This typist may have been a junior who has attained the age of 21 years. The increase would be due to basic wage variation and promotion to a higher grade.

Mr. OLIVER: The Premier's explanation does not appear to be altogether satisfactory, because I notice that the junior typist's salary has been increased from £223 to £238.

The PREMIER: I should say that the additional amount in this instance is a grade increase. In the former instance it may be that a senior typist has taken the place of a junior typist.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Printing, £185,855:

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: Will the Premier tell the Committee whether the Government Printer does work for outside firms and for the Commonwealth Government?

The PREMIER: I have no knowledge of the Government Printer doing work for private firms, but he executes some printing for the Commonwealth Bank and Commonwealth departments. For instance, he prints the Commonwealth electoral roll.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £22,300:

Item, Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, and Travelling Library, £14,700.

Mr. HEGNEY: I would ask the Premier to give consideration to establishing an industrial research library. The Employers'

Federation has such a library, but it would be in the interests of both employers' and employees' unions if such a library could be housed at either the Arbitration Court or the Public Library. Industrial advocates could take advantage of it and this would lead to quicker despatch of business in the State Arbitration Court.

The PREMIER: The Attorney General has informed me that the Government has arranged for the reprinting of the Industrial Arbitration Act and amendments, with annotations of decisions on the various sections. This will be added to the Public Library and should prove useful to those interested in industrial law and industrial matters. I will make investigations into the proposal put forward by the member for Pilbara.

Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £3,093,274:

Item, Kindergarten Union, £9,000.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Last year the sum of £9,000 was put on the Estimates for this item, but the expenditure was only £5,373. The Kindergarten Union does not fail to keep itself prominently before the Government and is continually seeking financial assistance. Why was less than £6,000 paid to the union when £9,000 was provided? Was it only window-dressing on the part of the Government last year to put £9,000 on the Estimates, or did it have a real intention to pay the amount? If it did, what is the explanation for not paying it? I am satisfied there would not be any failure on the part of the Kindergarten Union to ask for the money. The Union would be well aware of the provision on the Estimates. What has happened? There is a further intention to pay £9,000 this year. Is this more window-dressing for the election?

The Minister for Housing: Window-dressing started a long time ago, if there has been window-dressing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, the day after the Government took office.

The Minister for Housing: There was a big increase.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is admitted, but it does not appear much justification for placing £9,000 on the Estimates and paying less than £6,000. There has been no diminution of centres to account for that

deficiency, and I know the Union requires financial assistance. Is it not a fact that the Union found it necessary to alter the arrangement with the local kindergarten committees and to require those committees to raise additional funds in order to pay the salaries of their teachers? If the Treasurer had not introduced these Estimates in such a deuced hurry he would be better informed.

The Minister for Housing: I think he is pretty well informed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He has not made such a wonderful showing up to date. I hope he has a satisfactory answer to my questions. If he had the financial tables that he was doing his best to get prepared, and the other financial data available, we would get on much better. We are entitled to a full explanation of this deficiency. If the Government was in earnest in providing for £9,000 last year, it should have given the Union that amount, because it needed the money.

The Minister for Lands: There was a similar position in 1946-47.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are dealing with the position now.

The Minister for Lands: You were window-dressing then, I take it.

The PREMIER: This actually comes under the department of the Minister for Education and I think that all the information the hon. member wants could be obtained from him.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I have been caught that way before.

The PREMIER: Despite his sarcastic remarks, the hon. member knows it is not possible for a Treasurer to have an intimate knowledge of all the details in regard to the Treasury when he is caught on the hop, as I am tonight. As a matter of fact, I have spent two afternoons with the Under Treasurer on these two items—one last week and one today. Furthermore I have taken them home.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I was not being sarcastic; just a little jocular.

The PREMIER: I am glad of that. I will give the hon. member the information I have here and the other information can be obtained from the Minister for Education. The information I have is that the

subsidy to the Kindergarten Union is based on the average attendance, with a maximum of £200 for each centre of children. No centre is recognised by the Government without the approval of the Minister for Education. The subsidy is paid on the certificate of an officer of the Education Department that a centre is required and is conducted satisfactorily. Additional assistance is provided in the grant towards meeting the cost of allowances to students in training, recoup of loss of fees from students in training, and grants to encourage the opening of free kindergartens in country centres, and also contributions towards administration cost.

I am not able to say why the whole of this amount was not spent. The sum of £9,000 was provided and £5,373 was expended. I should think the answer was—but the Minister will be able to say whether I am right or wrong—that there were no applications for the balance of the money or that certain centres did not measure up to the requirements. This year £9,000 is provided, and I can assure the hon. member it is the hope of the Minister for Education and the Government that the money will be spent.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Will you see that the Minister gives us the information, if that is not the correct explanation?

The PREMIER: I will.

Item, Goldfields Fresh Air League, £100.

Mr. KELLY: I am wondering what explanation the Premier will give of this amount, which is totally inadequate. Since the league was founded it has done a tremendous amount of good, particularly in the last few years. Thousands of children have been given holidays, mostly at Fremantle and, latterly, at Esperance, because of the charity of many people throughout the State. Three years ago the league was revived after a wartime recess and a committee on the Goldfields decided to re-establish the holiday scheme and with that object purchased some buildings on the Goldfields from the Disposals Commission and had them re-designed and re-erected in Esperance. Last year alone, 300 children were given a holiday at Esperance because of the efforts of people who voluntarily assisted to

build the home, which cost roughly about £12,000. Towards that amount the only sum that can be said to have been attributable to Government effort was £3,000, which came from the Lotteries Commission.

Now we find on the Estimates the niggardly amount of £100, and I am wondering whether the Premier's conscience is not smiting him very hard when he realises what a trivial sum it is. It would have been more appropriate if the Premier had added a couple of noughts to the figure. How far does he think £100 will go towards providing for children to be taken to the coast? The cost of taking 300 last year was about £5 per head. But living costs are ever on the increase, so that that amount will probably be inadequate in the future. A substantial increase should be provided on the Estimates for this league.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Premier went through the Fresh Air League buildings at Esperance and he was full of praise for them. Children go there from Laverton, Leonora and other back country places as well as from Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder. The expenses are rising, and £100 is inadequate. I hope the Premier will increase the amount. The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie suggested adding a couple of noughts to the figure and I agree that if it were increased to £10,000 it would be better. Something will have to be done to assist the league otherwise the children will cease to enjoy the benefits they have received for the last two years.

Mr. STYANTS: I hope the Premier will see his way clear to increase this amount. The sum mentioned here was set aside many years ago. The Premier will realise that the cost of sending children from the Goldfields is greater than it used to be. The holiday provided by the league is not an additional one for children of wealthy or reasonably well-to-do people on the Goldfields, but is confined to those of parents who are in poor financial circumstances and who would not otherwise get a holiday at the coast. The league for many years operated a home at Bunbury, but after the construction of the building at Esperance it relinquished the Bunbury home.

I think the Treasurer was generous enough then to vote a certain amount of money for its purchase by some other society to carry out a similar work to that of the Goldfields Fresh Air League, but in respect of a different part of the country. The miners on the Goldfields realise their responsibility to this home at Esperance and levy themselves a certain amount—I think one penny in the pound—on their wages. Despite the fairly substantial sum which that brings in per annum, the league has difficulty in meeting its commitments. If the Premier could increase the amount here it would be helping a very good cause and would be much appreciated by the people on the Goldfields.

The PREMIER: This amount has been on the Estimates for some years. I think members have missed the point. This sum is paid as a concessional grant for railway passes to children under the auspices of the Goldfields Fresh Air League and is not a general donation towards the buildings, etc. I know there has been an increase in railway fares, and because of that, I would be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to increasing the amount. If I am given a reminder I will look into the matter.

Item, Alexandra Home—Mothercraft, £3,100:

Mr. GRAHAM: I want to compliment the Treasurer on having placed an amount considerably larger than usual on the Vote to support this home, which cares for unmarried mothers. On previous occasions considerable sums have been set aside but very little has been expended. In 1946-47 not one penny under this Vote went to this necessary and deserving institution. It is a shame that the home should have to go to the people, as it did recently, seeking donations in order to carry on its work. We must realise that quite a number of girls from time to time find themselves in an unfortunate predicament, and that the public, generally, is anti-social in its outlook. It is often said that the bad girls do not get into trouble; they—

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Know too much.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, or find ways and means of dealing with the situation. But the unfortunate girls who do get into bother are worthy of the best that can be done for them. After all, they are shortly

to bear young Australians. Every effort should be made to shelter and rehabilitate them. In the Press yesterday, I think, there was the report of an unfortunate young girl who lost her life as the result of an illegal operation. To a great extent the community at large is to blame for such tragedies because of such things as the pointing of the finger, the ridicule and the ostracism by the public. Girls who find themselves in such a predicament prefer to risk the result of such an operation—about a quarter of a million each year in the U.S.A. place themselves in the hands of quacks—rather than face the humility that is heaped on them by the community. The work, therefore, of this institution merits the wholehearted support of the Government and it should not be necessary for it to appeal to the public.

Surely the Government should recognise the importance of this humane work and make certain that proper facilities are provided for the institution. I compliment the Government on the increase in the sum made available and hope there will not be a repetition of what happened in previous years when, although a considerable sum was set aside for the purpose, only a fraction of it was paid to the institution.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Although this home is not in my electorate I know of the splendid work of the management in recent years, and I commend it to the Government.

The PREMIER: This item includes £600 towards mothercraft training, and £2,500 towards the establishment of the home. A committee of ladies, headed by Mrs. Dumas, wife of the Director of Works, manages the home, which is now a training centre where girls are trained as mothercraft nurses. They work under an award here, whereas previously they used to be trained in Adelaide. With the increased finance that has been made available I understand the home will now be able to function successfully.

Item, Parks, Recreation Grounds, etc., £6,350:

Mr. GRAHAM: In the early hours of Friday morning I mentioned the shocking state of affairs existing at the East Perth cemetery. Surely that area, almost in the centre of the metropolis, should be closed as a cemetery. I know that burials do not now take place there and I feel that action should

be taken to place the headstones somewhere else, so that better use could be made of the land, which commands a magnificent view in all directions. I would be pleased to escort a party of members to inspect that cemetery and I am sure they would be shocked at the conditions existing there. There is a caretaker who was appointed comparatively recently but, not being a member or servant of Parliament, he cannot be on the job 24 hours a day and cannot prevent the damage that is being done. I would like the Government to give this matter immediate attention.

The PREMIER: As soon as I get the opportunity I will be glad to accept the invitation of the hon. member and inspect this cemetery. I agree, in view of what the hon. member has said, that action is necessary, and among the pioneers buried in that cemetery are my own grandparents. As soon as I have the opportunity I will inspect that cemetery and see what can be done about it.

Mr. BRADY: Can the Premier give the Committee some information about expenditure on the foreshores and at Crawley? The river foreshores round Bassendean and Guildford are in bad repair, and the Guildford Council has asked the Government to help towards improving diving boards and other amenities in that area. Will the Premier assist in that regard?

Item, School Sites—Purchase of, including Title Fees, Surveys, etc., £7,500:

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: When the Premier paid a visit to the Kimberley district he indicated to the local authority in Hall's Creek that he was prepared to agree to the provision of a school at Hall's Creek for the children of the East Kimberley district. Could the Premier tell me just how far advanced is this provision? The Premier was most interested in this particular project and I know he is sincere in his efforts to do something for us. Over the last six or 12 months the people in my district have become restive, and have written to me wanting to know what is being done and why the project has not been put into operation. I hope the Premier will give me this information.

Mr. BRADY: I would like to get some information in regard to what school sites have been purchased and whether there is any likelihood of sites being secured for schools in the Midvale area and also in

Hamersley-street where the D.P. people and their children are to be placed. The Midland Junction and Bassendean areas are in urgent need of school facilities because there are large numbers of families—up to 120 and 150 families—without any school facilities. Has anything been done about the purchasing of sites for schools at Midvale, North Midland and Bassendean?

The PREMIER: As the member for Kimberley said, when I was at Hall's Creek I met the people there, accompanied by the hon. member, and I did express interest in the proposal put forward that a school be established there. I know that efforts have been made to establish such a school and costs have been worked out. I am not sure whether plans have been drawn but I have made a note of it and I will see that the hon. member gets further information when the Minister for Education introduces his Estimates. I am not able to tell members what individual sites have been acquired. However, I have taken the names of the schools in the districts mentioned by the member for Guildford-Midland and I will ask the Minister for Education to look into the matter.

Item, Children's Receiving Home, Applecross.—Purchase of Land, £1,236:

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am amazed at the marvellous progress the Government is making in the purchase of this site. The necessary preliminary work was done by the previous Government. The site was inspected by officers of the Child Welfare Department and myself. We were perfectly satisfied that it was an admirable site and steps were taken to have the land purchased. Then there was a change of Government. An amount of £1,250, required for the purchase of the land, was on the Estimates and for the year 1947-48 the Government spent the large sum of £2. I questioned this matter last year and wanted to know whether the Government intended to go ahead with the purchase or whether it was proposing to abandon the idea. I felt that there may have been something in the latter suggestion because I was aware that considerable sums of money had been spent on the receiving home at Mt. Lawley. That home, we had been advised previously, did not warrant the expenditure. It appeared that the Government was going to be content with that home for the provision of

the children. This year we find that the estimate is £1,236 which is an increase of £1,222 over the expenditure for last year. The expenditure for 1947-48 was £2 and in 1948-49 it was £14. At this rate of progress, we will be buying this land about the year 2,000. The Minister for Housing talks about perspicacity in decision. This is a fine example of it.

The Minister for Housing: That's a jolly good phrase!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but the Minister cannot apply it to this Government.

The Minister for Housing: It was coined for this Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It has taken three years to do something about purchasing a block of land. Does the Government intend to buy it or not? Let the Government be frank in this matter and say so. If the Government does not intend to do anything then I will have something to say about it. Surely it should not take three years, even for this Government, to decide what it is going to do. There can be no justification for this delay. Subsequent to my speaking on this matter last year the Minister gave me some explanation but I have forgotten just what it was. I have looked for it in "Hansard" but I am unable to find it so it looks as though the Minister must have given it to me verbally.

The Premier: I remember you raising the question last year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The position is still the same. Apparently the land has not been bought. What is the Government going to do about it? Is it going to buy this land and build a home? I think the previous Government provided £100,000 on the Estimates for the erection of a home on this site. But I have not looked it up to see whether there is provision in these Estimates for the erection of a home. What is the explanation for the delay in the purchase?

The PREMIER: The note I have says that the site will be used for the building of a receiving home for children, and it will be placed in the care of the Child Welfare Department until such time as it can be more suitably placed. There is an estimated cost of £1,236 for the resumption. I dis-

cussed this matter with the Under Treasurer today and took down what I thought he said. He said it was resumed in 1945.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Then why don't you pay for it?

The Minister for Housing: Why didn't you pay for it?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is definitely wrong.

The PREMIER: What is wrong?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That it was resumed in 1945.

The PREMIER: He said it was resumed in 1945 and plans have been prepared with an estimated expenditure of £100,000 for the building.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is so.

The PREMIER: And the hon. member asks why a start has not been made on that building.

Hon. T. J. Tonkin: I did not ask that. I wanted to know why you do not pay for the land.

The Attorney General: Probably no claim has been made by the owner. You cannot pay for it until that is done.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Daniel has come to judgment.

Mr. Graham: That would account for two years only.

The PREMIER: This is the information I have, and further information can be supplied to the hon. member by the Minister for Child Welfare.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I hope the Premier will make a note of it and see that it is supplied.

Item, Incidental, £1,700.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I do not know what "incidental" means, but I suggest to the Premier that he allows for something under it, which is a new subject altogether. I noticed in last Saturday's newspaper a paragraph headed "Service in War." It reads—

Members of the forces eligible for the general service badge could now apply for it, the Minister for Defence (Mr. Dedman) said today. The badge is awarded to honourably discharged men and women of the forces, with 28 or more days of service during the war, whose service did not entitle them to the returned from active service badge; also to representatives of philanthropic bodies, official Press correspondents, and other non-members attached officially to the forces.

I am interested in the last two lines. During the war there was an organisation known as the Civil Defence Corps, the personnel of which were certainly not attached to the Defence Department, but undoubtedly they were part and parcel of the Defence Forces. It will be remembered that the Premiers agreed to take over the organisation of civil defence. The personnel of this corps were attested, and although not called upon to show their ability, I have not the slightest doubt that they would have carried out their duties in a first-class manner if their services had been required. I understand now that service medals issued previously are to be withdrawn and general service medals issued. The members of the Civil Defence Corps were undoubtedly promised some recognition, if not by the Commonwealth Government then by the State Government. That promise was made to me by the then Premier, Mr. Willcock.

When I was Minister for Civil Defence, I did my best to have the Commonwealth Government recognise their services, but I was unsuccessful. I consider that those 13,000 attested people in Western Australia have not had a fair deal, particularly some of those who spent many months, and even years, training members, to say nothing of the time spent by those undergoing the training. Under this proposal, the medical men who were never away from a base camp are now probably entitled to this medal, but I have no objection to that. For instance, let me cite Dr. Nash. He must have spent scores of hours training civil defence personnel, and he has received no recognition and, if there is to be a general service medal issued, I contend that the members of the Civil Defence Corps should be recognised.

The Premier: Are the members of the V.D.C. included in this proposal?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I do not know, but the V.D.C. was recognised as a branch of the Defence Forces. I should say that the V.D.C. will come in the category mentioned in the cutting I have quoted of "other non-members attached officially to the forces." With all due respect to the V.D.C., the Civil Defence Corps would have been the first into action, long before the V.D.C., because the bombs would have been dropping before the enemy landed, and members of the Civil Defence Corps would have gone into action immediately. I suggest that the

Premier take this matter up with Mr. Dedman with a view to something being done about it because it is extremely unfair that these people should be overlooked.

Item, Exchange on Overseas Interest, Payments and remittances, £600,000.

Mr. STYANTS: Could the Premier inform the Committee whether this amount includes interest on loans raised by the Railway Department overseas and not shown as a debit in the departmental financial returns?

The PREMIER: This item represents payments for Government purchases.

Mr. Styants: Would that include railway purchases on loan money?

The PREMIER: Yes, it may be purchases by the State Electricity Commission, purchases of locomotives and suchlike.

Mr. Styants: That is not shown in the financial returns of the Railway Department as a debit item.

The PREMIER: No, I do not think it is. It is shown in this Vote under the Treasury Department. This item is to provide for payment of interest on loans in London and payments for expenditure incurred through the London office. That is on purchase and not on loan.

Item, Subsidy—Superannuation Board, £5,500.

Mr. STYANTS: Evidently this is a new provision. Could the Premier let us know what it is for?

The PREMIER: Owing to the reduced rate of interest earned on investments, to provide for additional payment of contributions the Government guaranteed to meet the difference in interest between the average earnings on investments of less than 3½ per cent.

The Minister for Housing: We did that by a Bill two years ago.

Item, Road Transport Subsidy—Mt. Magnet-Sandstone, £2,500.

Mr. TRIAT: This is the first provision made for the subsidy, because the line has only just been pulled up. I would like to know whether the subsidy is paid on so much per ton per mile, or is it based on the passenger fares or stock freight?

The PREMIER: Owing to the discontinuance of this railway, a temporary cartage subsidy has been made to pay £30 every four weeks, between Sandstone and Anketell, for the transport of passengers, goods and mail, and 14s. 6d. per ton for haulage of wool. The subsidy will eventually cover road transport from Mt. Magnet to Sandstone until tenders are called.

[*Mr. Hill took the Chair.*]

Item, Grant to Murray Road Board for foreshore and river improvements, £50.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Estimates show that only £43 was spent last year. Is there any special arrangement with regard to this grant, that the amount paid to the board shall be that which is actually spent? I am not opposed to the idea, for the payment of such grants could well be extended. Leighton Beach serves a similar purpose in the North-East Fremantle electorate and people from the metropolitan area use the facilities there. The local authorities have as much claim for financial assistance as has the Murray Road Board.

The PREMIER: This item appeared on the Estimates during the early stages of my parliamentary career.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Perhaps you were responsible for it.

The PREMIER: No, it was on the Estimates annually before I entered the House. It represents the revenue for foreshore licenses collected by the Murray Road Board and refunded for administrative purposes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Then there is no hope!

Item, Royal Mint, additional grant, £35,000.

Mr. TRIAT: I was under the impression that the Mint represented a contribution direct from the Imperial Government. What does that institution cost Western Australia in one year? Is it engaged in production of coins for the State or for the Commonwealth?

Mr. RODOREDA: Dealing with the same item, can the Premier say what benefit accrues to Western Australia from the expenditure of an ever increasing amount on the Mint? The expenditure for the last financial year was £36,400 plus £25,000 which is the annual grant under a special Act. The actual

cost is somewhere in the neighbourhood of £70,000 and the increase in the last 12 months has been terrific, representing 50 per cent. over the Estimates for last year. Is there any refund from the Imperial Government? What benefit accrues to the State through the Mint being established here? Would the State be any worse off if its existence were to be abolished tomorrow?

The PREMIER: I discussed this particular item with the Under Treasurer this afternoon when I told him the notes I had been furnished with did not contain all the information I required. He told me that we could expect to recover the whole of the expenditure in connection with the Mint. The increased provision on the Estimates is to cover the extra charges in making Commonwealth coinage and the increased cost of materials, wages, etc. Members will remember that some years ago when there was a suggestion that the Mint should be removed from Perth and re-established in Canberra, there was a strong protest against any such contemplated action.

Mr. Triat: But you are not really sure about the money being refunded?

The PREMIER: Yes, it is expected that we will recover the whole of the cost.

Mr. RODOREDA: Has it been understood in previous years that the total expenditure on the Mint would be recovered? If that is so, I think the item is wrongly shown in the Estimates and there should be some setoff against it. I cannot remember any recoup ever being shown. I can understand the difficulty with regard to the statutory obligation for the payment of £25,000; but if there has been any refund of revenue expenditure, it should appear in the Estimates. In fact, no charge should be shown if the amount is recovered.

The PREMIER: I presume that the procedure adopted at present is that which has been carried out in former years. The item has been on the Estimates annually for as long as I can remember. Minting is being done not for the State but for the Commonwealth, and in past years we used to mint sovereigns for the British Government. I know that the Governor of the Mint always came from Britain. I do not think the State has ever been involved in any cost in re-

gard to the Mint. If the hon. member will remind me, I will obtain the information for him.

Item, University of Western Australia, additional grant, £65,513.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When the Premier saw fit to put someone else in my place on the Senate, he explained in a letter to me that it was expected that the new appointee would be successful in reducing the amount of money required from the Government. The method adopted does not seem to have proved as successful as the Premier anticipated because the grant has gone on increasing and is likely to continue doing so. In his letter to me the Premier said the gentleman to be appointed in my place was an accountant, who would have consultations with the Government in connection with the affairs of the University. As I was curious to know how many consultations had been held, I asked some questions and it was obvious from the Premier's answers that those consultations had not been held at all. All he could say was that Mr. King had frequent discussions with the Under Treasurer. Members of the Senate usually gather together in a room before starting the meeting, and they discuss the weather and various other topics. I suppose that was when the financial discussions with the Under Treasurer took place. The Premier must be quite pleased with the results because the amount of the grant continues to grow.

The Minister for Housing: I do not know that it might have been otherwise.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I give the Minister my assurance that had I continued on the Senate, the grant would not have been greater that it is now, because I would have kept just as close a watch on it as the present appointee does today. The grant must go on increasing if we want education at the University standard because we will have to pay for it. If we are to make provision for additional students at this high educational level we must expect a substantial increase in the Vote. I would never be one to deny the necessary funds for the purpose, but we must have regard to the money required for the various other branches of education, so that the system will not get out of balance.

The Minister for Housing: I think that is very important.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: University education cannot be properly and economically given if the foundations are not well laid. In comparison with other universities, ours is at a disadvantage, in that it is free, although not altogether free, as the students are required to pay substantial laboratory and other fees. They do not, however, pay tuition fees. We might blink somewhat at the increase in the Vote from year to year, but if we wish to provide the education we must be prepared to pay for it.

The PREMIER: The member for North-East Fremantle is aware that no matter who was placed on the Senate, under present conditions a large sum of money would be required to finance the University. The base figure of £40,000 is provided for in the Act governing the University, but of course no one would suggest that the University could function properly on that sum. Last year the expenditure was £65,513. The member for North-East Fremantle has stated the position in regard to education very clearly; his views should, I think, be the views of the great majority of the people of the State. All Australian Universities are in financial difficulties but, because ours is a free University, a greater responsibility is cast on the Government. The hon. member referred to Mr. King. He was appointed to the Senate because he was an accountant and it was thought that his qualifications would be of advantage. He was not appointed because the member for North-East Fremantle was of a different political persuasion.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Ah!

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Let us be frank about it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Let us be accurate about it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You lost no time in getting rid of me.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows that he was appointed to the Senate because he held the portfolio of Education.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: He knows he was not.

The PREMIER: That was the reason given for his appointment. The Labour

Party has a representative on the Senate in the person of the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is bad luck you put that other accountant on.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to the Labour Party being represented. Should it become necessary, I would be pleased to see the member for North-East Fremantle on the Senate again. I am told that he was a valuable member.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why did you sack him?

The PREMIER: I have been telling you.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What made you lose a valuable member?

The PREMIER: Because the University was troubling the Government. We wanted a person well versed in finance and, as Mr. King was a practising accountant, we thought he would be a useful member of the Senate.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The member for North-East Fremantle is a qualified accountant.

The PREMIER: But not a practising accountant.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I think you should state why you have not provided for a medical school, as you promised.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows the obstacle in the way.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It is the same obstacle as existed three years ago.

The PREMIER: Some hundreds of thousands of pounds would have to be spent on buildings and equipment which are unprocurable. When delivering my Policy Speech I said that, if circumstances permitted, we would make a start with the medical school, but circumstances do not. I can but hope that it will not be too long before we can establish the school.

Item, Coal Mine Workers' Pension Fund—Government Contribution, £3,500.

Mr. May: I notice that the Estimate for this year is the same as that for the previous year. Under the Act, the amount should be £4,500. I would like the Premier to explain.

The PREMIER: The Act came into operation on the 1st July, 1944, and the amount provided is the contribution payable to the fund by the Government. I have not any further information to give the hon. member.

The Minister for Housing: I think the change may take place when the next valuation is made.

Mr. MAY: That may be so; but if the Government provides only £3,500, is the fund going to suffer as a result? Under the original Act it should be £4,500.

The Minister for Housing: The obligation is laid down by the Act, so the Act prescribes in the end what must be paid.

Mr. MAY: And the amount is £4,500.

The Minister for Housing: That is the maximum.

Mr. MAY: That is the amount for this particular year. Since the Act was brought into force it has risen each year and the minimum amount this year should be £4,500. So the estimate is £1,000 short.

The Minister for Housing: I will look into that, as representing the Minister for Mines.

Item, State Shipping Service Loss, £250,000.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like to ask the Premier how he made such an awful mistake of £118,000 in his Estimate. He estimated a loss of £295,000 and finished up with £413,000.

The PREMIER: The amount was provided to meet the anticipated State Shipping Service loss in maintaining services to meet the requirements for the North-West. This service, like others, has to meet the increased costs of wages and other charges consequent upon present-day conditions. The decrease of £163,000 in the Estimate for this year compared with the expenditure for last year would be accounted for by the fact that last year expenditure had to be incurred in placing the "Koolinda" in dock at Melbourne for overhaul and repairs. I have informed members previously that the cost of those repairs far exceeded expectations, amounting to well over £100,000.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would remind the Premier that this could have been avoided. Before the "Koolinda" was sent

to Melbourne, I asked whether it was intended to slip the vessel in Fremantle, and the answer was that the slipway was not suitable. Thinking that I might have received wrong information I did not pursue the matter at the time, but I have found since that the slipway is suitable and that the only thing to be done to enable the "Koolinda" to be slipped is to strengthen the cradle and alter the purchase. I am satisfied that the job could have been done a lot cheaper and more quickly here and the money could have been circulated in Western Australia instead of in another State.

The Premier: What is the hon. member's source of information?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I obtained my information from technical men around the port.

Mr. RODOREDA: I would support the member for Fremantle in his request to the Premier to see if something cannot be done to arrange for repairs to the "Koolinda" to be effected in this State. I think the bill on this occasion was for about £170,000. Apart from the money which could undoubtedly have been saved had the work been done in Western Australia, there is, as the hon. member pointed out, the matter of the benefit that this State and its work people would have derived from its expenditure here. There is little doubt in my mind that if a thorough investigation were made it would be possible so to arrange matters that the "Koolinda" could be put on the slip at Fremantle, with only comparatively minor alterations to that slip. The Premier should have a really thorough investigation made. I do not think it has been done properly.

The Premier: Yes. The member for Fremantle previously raised the point and I had an investigation made.

Mr. RODOREDA: I do not think the Premier should be put off by some man's say-so that it cannot be done. It would be of incalculable benefit to this State if we put all our State ships on the slip for repair locally. We can now do that with all ships except the "Koolinda," and that vessel is so little in excess of the tonnage and size of ships that can be put on the slip at Fremantle that I think another investigation should be made. We should have the opinion of a consulting engineer and not of

local people who have already forwarded a report. Consulting engineers have been brought in to investigate matters a lot less important. I would also like the Premier's opinion as to whether it is not unfair to debit the State Shipping Service with the one year's expenditure of £170,000 incurred in respect of the "Koolinda." I think the bulk of that amount could well have been capitalised. The thorough overhaul the "Koolinda" has received will necessitate only minor repairs being made at the annual docking for quite a number of years.

Item, Collie Miners' Hostel, £4,800.

Mr. MAY: I would remind the Premier that the hostel at Collie has now been closed down by the Government so that the £4,800 on the Estimates will not be required. I would suggest that in view of the lack of accommodation for single men at Collie, £4,800 might be spent in the building of a hostel for single men in the coalmining industry. Forty or 50 men are coming to Collie very shortly in connection with the ryccena factory, and 50 have been nominated to come from England as coalminers. Accommodation will be required for these people.

The PREMIER: The hostel was closed because the building is being taken over for another purpose. The Government has since purchased it for £150,000, and it is to be sold to a company to be formed to undertake the manufacture of ryccena. The question of additional accommodation at Collie is continuously before the Government. I have had many discussions with the member for Collie about it. The suggestion now is that the money should be used to provide accommodation for single men at Collie. I think the Minister for Immigration is consulting with the Minister for Housing to see what steps can be taken to cater for those men. I do not know what amount will be required, but the Government will do all it can to see that accommodation is provided for men, whether married or single, who are prepared to work in the coalmines. As the hon. member knows, the matter of housing at Collie is treated as a first priority.

Item, Subsidy for Transport of Superphosphate by Road, £30,000.

Mr. STYANTS: I am not much concerned about the miscalculation here, because I suppose it is due to the fact that

about 25 per cent. of the tractive power of the railways had to be used to haul water as a result of the adverse season, but I am concerned about the discrepancy between the figures on the Estimates and those given to me in answer to questions I put to the Treasurer earlier in the session. On the 28th June I asked the Premier—

What are the amounts involved in the subsidy paid to road transport of superphosphate for the 12 months ended the 21st June, 1949—

(a) Already paid;

(b) Estimated amount involved in the recent extension of the period in which the subsidy will be paid this year.

The Premier's reply was—

(a) Subsidy to the 21st June, £116,400.

(b) Estimated subsidy from the 15th June to the 30th June, £900.

That would make a total of £125,400 from the 1st July, 1948, to the 30th June, 1949. Now there is a discrepancy of about £24,000 or £25,000. The question arises: Was some guess work attempted when the figures were given earlier in the session, or are the figures in the Estimates incorrect? I had occasion previously to complain about incorrect information supplied by a department to the Minister in answer to a question asked by me.

Mr. TRIAT: I am not able to understand why a subsidy on the cartage of super. should be paid. I can appreciate that, when times are bad and the farmers are in difficulties, the Government should assist them in this way, but for five or six years now they have been in the happy position of not requiring a subsidy from the taxpayers of the State so as to put on their farms an essential commodity. The payment of £100,000 in this way is scandalous. If the farming industry subsequently strikes bad times, then the Government should come to its assistance. If we cannot transport super. by train, the farmer should do the job himself. The Government should give further consideration to subsidising a body of men as prosperous as any other in the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I have been waiting anxiously for this item to arise. The other evening when I said that this subsidy had risen by 200 per cent., and had caused thousands of pounds worth of damage to our roads, the Minister for Education said, "This

is a joke on you." Well, if there is any joke, let us have it; especially because of this circular I have here, issued by the member for Subiaco. It states—

Stop Costly Muddling. The Subsidy Comedy (in 3 acts).

This is not a subsidy comedy, but a subsidy tragedy. The Minister for Education, unfortunately, is not here. The other night he said, "The joke is on you." I would like to know what the joke is.

The PREMIER: I do not know anything about this joke. It must have arisen when I was in the East. I do not think the member for Kalgoorlie need have any doubt about the accuracy of the figures in the Estimates.

Mr. Styants: What about those you gave me earlier? There is a 25 per cent. discrepancy.

The PREMIER: I just do not know about that, but I would say that these can be taken as the correct ones for the 12 months. These are to the end of the financial year. The member for Mt. Magnet objects to the payment of the subsidy on the ground that the farmer can well afford to pay it himself. It is unfortunate that the railways were unable to cope with the super. traffic. Members know the condition of the locomotives and the heavy strain that was placed on them in the carting of water to the dry areas. There were 51 engines a week engaged on that work. The use of super. greatly increases production and, had road transport not been subsidised, less super. would have been used, with a consequent decrease in production.

Mr. Styants: The railways would have lost another £150,000 in addition to the £315,000.

The PREMIER: They would have lost considerable traffic in wheat, stock and so on. I point out that there is a lesser amount, about £30,000, on the Estimates this year for the subsidy. It is hoped that the railways will deal with a far greater tonnage of super. this year than they did last year.

Mr. Rodoreda: Are there any grounds for that hope?

The PREMIER: The Commissioner of Railways is formulating a plan to transport super. to central stations from which it

can be distributed, and it is hoped that from now on the locomotive position will improve. The increase in freights will make a difference in the cost as between rail and road transport. I have endeavoured to explain how this expenditure, mentioned by the member for Fremantle and the member for Mt. Magnet, is justified.

Mr. TRIAT: The Premier says that had the farmers not received their super. freight free or with a subsidy of £100,000 last season, and £30,000 for next year, they would not have used so much super., and would have produced less wheat. That cannot be correct. That argument could be applied to any branch of production. No farmer who has been on his property since the beginning of the recent war should need to ask the taxpayers for any subsidy. The farmers are prosperous and one seldom sees a report of the estate of a deceased farmer at less than £10,000 or £20,000. The railways carried the burden for the farmers in bad times and the farmers should now reciprocate by paying freight on their goods. I would like a further explanation from the Premier.

The PREMIER: What I meant to convey was that without the subsidy on road cartage of super. the farmers would have had a great deal less super. to use, as the railways could not handle it.

Mr. Triat: Could the farmers not have paid the cost of road transport?

The PREMIER: If they had been called upon to pay the additional freight, as a result of the failure of the railways to handle the super., much less super. would have been used, and production would have been affected.

Mr. Styants: Would they not have paid the extra £1 per ton in order to get their crops in?

The PREMIER: I doubt it. One pound per ton is a big increase in the cost of super.

Mr. MANN: I agree with the Premier that without the subsidy we would have had decreased production. Not all farmers are prosperous. Had the present Opposition looked after the railways during their 14 years of office, this situation would not have arisen, and they must accept responsibility for the condition of the railways.

Had they been on the Government side of the House last season, they would have paid the subsidy, as the Government did, because it was a national matter. The Government was justified in the action it took.

Mr. STYANTS: The member for Beverley says the railways did an excellent job in carting super. and making the farming community a present of £319,000, which was the loss incurred over the 12 months in hauling that commodity. He now says the railways were not able to haul the super. because of the condition of the system. He evades the point that the Railway Department at the same time used 25 per cent. of its tractive effort hauling water, either directly or indirectly, for the use of the farmers. If it was not used directly for their stock, the water was used to run the trains, so that the farmers' produce could be shifted. The Premier contends that without the subsidy by the taxpayers of the State there would have been decreased production. I was informed earlier in the session that 126,000 tons of super. had been transported by road at a cost to the taxpayers of the State of £125,000 in subsidy.

I find it difficult to believe that with the present high price of wheat the farmers will not pay an additional sum in road subsidy for the purpose of getting their super. out for the planting of their crops. It must be remembered that the goldmines, if they were given, say, £450,000 in reduction of railway freights, would probably produce more gold. For every man directly employed in the mining industry there are four other men employed in ancillary industries. I have no objection, and I had no objection in the past, to these low rates being set for the carriage of super. on the railways, and if necessary for the road transport subsidy for super. When the prices of the products of the farming community are very low. However, they are now on the crest of the wave of prosperity.

A friend of mine who is a sheep and wheat farmer in the Kellerberrin district, told me only a short time ago that the amount of money he had received over the last three or four years had actually been an embarrassment to him as far as taxation was concerned. He was endeavouring to get something written off his farm which would be taken into consideration by the Taxation Department as not

being taxable. While we all agree with the principle of very low freight rates for the farming industry in times when the returns are low, now that prices are good, farmers should be prepared to pay at least the cost of hauling their super. and wheat. Wheat is also carried at a very low freight rate.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is a well known saying that hope springs eternal in the human breast. What the Premier said tonight goes to prove that saying. The Premier will recall that I was very critical of the Estimates on this item when another Budget was introduced earlier this session. By a trick the Government has so arranged that we have two Budgets in the one session and that precludes me from quoting from "Hansard" remarks which I made when this item was under discussion earlier this session. However, my memory is fairly good and I can recall what I said. The estimate for 1948-49 was £500. The Premier made that estimate when he had before him as a guide the estimate of £48,000 for the previous year. I drew attention to that and I told the Premier that it was ridiculous to forecast in that way when the railways could not handle the traffic which the Premier expected.

The Minister for Railways: Did they not exceed their expectations up to the end of December?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The expectations were that it would not take more than £500 and it actually took £100,000. That is how close the Premier got to his expectations.

The Minister for Railways: You know very well that the railways were ahead of their programme up to the end of December.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The previous year it cost £48,000 and the Government came along and said that it had cost £48,000 for the previous year, but it could be done for £500. Actually it cost £100,000.

The Premier: You cannot predict water shortages, can you?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier gave as his explanation that he had been assured by the railways that the department would do so much better. I told him that we had had this assurance too, and I asked the Premier if he believed those assurances. He said that he was hopeful. He must be still hopeful because he provides an estimate of £30,000 for this year when it cost

£100,000 last year. The Treasurer cannot keep on making forecasts which are so wide of the mark. If I am any judge he will not get through for anything like £30,000 and it will be nearer £50,000. I know that there will be a reduced quantity of super. for cartage. That is inevitable as a result of the recent industrial trouble.

The Minister for Railways: Not a great deal. There will be 360,000 tons, which will be 40,000 tons less.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I was prepared to calculate that there would be a much greater reduction and then these figures might have been somewhere near the mark. If what the Minister now says is correct, and there is only that difference, then I am certain the Premier will never get through for an expenditure of £30,000. We all know that this Government cannot resist requests put forward by the farmers. We have seen it over the past two years. The farmers have asked that the period for subsidies be extended and this Government has extended it each time the request has been put up, and I have no doubt that a similar request will come forward this year especially as it is election year. I cannot imagine that the Government will resist the requests for keeping on this subsidy for as long a period as before—if not longer. If the Government does that then it will not get through with an estimated expenditure of £30,000, or anything like that amount. Surely the Premier and the Minister for Railways must appreciate that. There was an expenditure of £48,000 for 1947-48 and an expenditure of £100,000 for 1948-49. Yet the Premier says that for 1949-50 the State will get through with an expenditure of £30,000.

The Minister for Railways: There is a new management and the steps being taken convince me that the railways will do a much better job than previously.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is nice to know that the Minister is convinced.

Mr. Ackland: The railways are already carting several more thousand tons of wheat per week.

Mr. Styants: And cutting out passenger trains to do it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like the member for Irwin-Moore to read the remarks passed on this item last year. They

are covered on page 2330 of Vol. No. 2 of "Hansard" 1948. He will see that I told the Premier that it was just too foolish to rely on the assurances of the Railway Department that it would do better. The Premier said he was hopeful that they would and now the Minister is convinced that they will.

The Minister for Railways: No, but that the new management will do better

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot separate the management from the railways.

The Minister for Railways: There will be a big difference.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Surely the management cannot do these things.

The Minister for Railways: The management will arrange for the railways to do it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is no good trying to separate them. If the management has assured the Minister, and he is convinced that this job will be done for £30,000 and it is not done, he cannot come along and say that the management was all right but the railways were all wrong. If the management of the railways has stated to the Minister, and he has accepted the statement, that the performances will be such an improvement on last year that we will not need a larger subsidy than £30,000, and the Minister has been convinced, then subsequently he cannot say that the railways could not do it although he believed the management.

The Minister for Railways: No, I won't, provided there are no strikes or hold-ups this year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We have no reason to believe that there will be any strikes or hold-ups.

The Minister for Railways: We hope not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are not budgeting upon the possibility of strikes.

The Minister for Railways: No, we are not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We must assume that this is a reasonable forecast and that the Premier is expected to get somewhere near the mark. When he is making an estimate in Parliament he is not making a wild guess. The provision of £500 last year was most unreal and I said so and was proved

right. The Minister cannot explain it away by saying that the railways had to cart water. They did have to cart water but not to that extent. It is possible that they may cart water to a greater extent than they did last year. I am firmly of the belief that it will take a lot more than £30,000 to satisfy the demands by the Treasurer for the cartage of super. this year. However, the Minister is convinced and the Premier is hopeful and we will see what happens.

Mr. HEGNEY: I move—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	21
Noes	21
Tie	0

AYES.	
Mr. Brady	Mr. Needham
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Fox	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Graham	Mr. Panton
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Triant
Mr. May	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. McCulloch	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Murray
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nalder
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Cornell	Mr. North
Mr. Doney	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hall	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Brand
Mr. McDonald	(Teller.)
PAIRS.	
Mr. Wise	Mr. Watts
Mr. Smith	Sir N. Keenan.

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the noes.

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. STYANTS: I think what was agitating the mind of the member for North-East Fremantle on this question was what effect the cartage of super. by the railways next year would have on the finances of the State. By having it moved by road I think there would be less loss to the State, without taking into consideration the enormous damage done to our roads by motor vehicles, than there would be if it were transported by the railways. Early in the year I asked a question of the Minister for Railways as to the amount of super. transported by road, and

I was told that 213,000 tons had been shifted by rail although I asked what had been shifted by road. I was told that the loss on that traffic was somewhere in the vicinity of £319,000. For every ton of super. hauled by the railways that would work out at a loss of 30s. on each ton, and if we take the amount of 124,000 tons shifted by road for a loss of £125,000 in subsidy paid in addition to the freight, we find that that is a fraction over £1 per ton paid in subsidy.

So from the Treasurer's point of view, disregarding the road damage, it is cheaper to pay a road subsidy than to cart the super. by rail, although it must be considered that there may be £20,000 or £100,000 worth of damage done to the roads. There must be something averaging £500,000 paid by the taxpayers of this State in subsidy for the haulage of super. I therefore think it will be agreed by the members concerned that a substantial amount is being paid to an industry that is enjoying a particularly prosperous time. However, that is not playing the game with the other taxpayers of the State and is in striking contrast to the treatment meted out to the goldmining industry.

Item, State Shipping Service—Freight Subsidy, £10,000.

MR. RODOREDA: I wonder whether the Premier will give me information as to what this item involves? Apparently it is a recoup from revenue to the State Shipping Service for the cartage of some goods under the recognised ordinary freight rates. As I cannot imagine what is the subject of this subsidy I hope the Premier will enlighten me.

THE PREMIER: This amount is provided to recoup the State Shipping Service in respect of subsidised freight on North-West cargoes. This applies to asbestos, and the Commonwealth pays half the subsidy. The hon. member knows that in order to assist the Blue Asbestos Company certain freight concessions, both by road and rail, have been made.

MR. RODOREDA: Freight concessions by road?

THE PREMIER: Yes, that is so. I think the road freight concession applies from Meekatharra overland. While the industry is in its infancy, the concessions apply. The target aimed at is an output of 6,000 tons

per annum, but that has not been approached yet and the mine is producing at a loss.

MR. RODOREDA: It means that the company is getting £20,000 from the Commonwealth and the State.

THE PREMIER: The Commonwealth pays half.

MR. RODOREDA: Why does it appear as having been paid by the State?

THE PREMIER: It is provided by the State in the first place.

Item, Board, License and Registration Fees to be paid to State Electricity Commission, £2,500.

MR. REYNOLDS: The Estimates show that last year the Vote was £6,050 and the expenditure £2,216. What was that expenditure for? It seems rather unusual.

THE PREMIER: The item applies to board, license and registration fees to be paid to the State Electricity Commission, which has taken over the administration of the Electrical Workers' Board and the Cinematograph Operators' Board. It is proposed to create other boards in connection with licenses respecting electrical contractors and so on, which will be administered by the Commission and the amount provided on the Estimates represents the equivalent of the fees estimated to be collected and is paid to the Commission to cover the cost of administration.

Item, Dairy Cattle compensation, £8,000.

MR. HOAR: I notice from the Estimates that the Vote last year was for £20,000 and the expenditure was £8,305 while the Vote for this year is £8,000. What is covered by the expenditure under this item? The Milk Act of 1946 provided for a contribution fund in respect of dairymen within certain prescribed areas, and from that fund dairymen were to be compensated on account of diseased cattle. That being so, how is it that the Government is responsible for such a large expenditure? Furthermore, will the Premier say why it is that the protection afforded dairyfarmers under the 1946 Act by way of compensation has not been extended, during the last two and a half years, to other areas in the South-West? I am well aware that this matter could be brought up on the Vote for the

Agricultural Department, but in view of the Premier's intention to seek the approval of the House to the bludgeoning of his Estimates through Parliament, it may be that the agricultural Estimates may not be discussed or that the Minister will not provide any answer to questions I may put to him.

We have had two abortive Bills dealing with the subject, one being in the first session of the present Parliament when it was introduced in the Legislative Council but ruled out of order in this House just prior to the close of the sittings. The second attempt was made during the first period of the current session when the Minister for Lands introduced a Bill. Apart from a few amendments I thought were desirable the measure seemed quite reasonable, yet without any explanation it was placed at the bottom of the notice paper and it has not moved from there. That was because the Minister disagreed with me on a triviality. I want to know whether that was done on the Minister's responsibility entirely, or was it as a result of a decision by the Government, after full discussion as to whether or not there should be an extension of the compensation fund to areas other than those already prescribed?

A Royal Commission sat, the Premier will recollect, to consider the sale of certain cattle in 1946 and presented an alarming report. So much was that so that I thought the Government would take an early opportunity to afford some protection regarding the sale of cattle and that it would apply, under the provisions of the Milk Act, to certain areas. From what I can gather as a result of these two abortive efforts, the Government has no interest whatever in any section of the dairying industry outside those dealt with in the 1946 Milk Act. In other words, the situation that arose in October, 1946, at a sale of cattle can be repeated anywhere else, and the Government has done nothing whatever in the last two and a half years to overcome the difficulty. As I may not have an opportunity to raise the matter on the agricultural Vote, I trust the Premier will reply to the complaint I make.

The PREMIER: This item refers to the estimated amount necessary as a contribution to the Dairy Cattle Compensation Fund and is applied to compensate the owner of dairy cattle that have been destroyed owing to the presence of tuberculosis. The compensation fund is now administered by the Milk Board and active measures are being taken for the T.B. testing of dairy herds. Contribution to the fund is voluntary on the part of dairymen who pay one farthing per gallon. The voluntary system has not proved satisfactory, and the matter will be dealt with by the Minister controlling the board at a subsequent date. The hon. member also asked when the payment of compensation was to be applied to cattle outside the jurisdiction of the Milk Board. The Government has been giving consideration to that question.

There is considerable diversity of opinion among cattle owners. Those who are producing beef, many of whom are in the hon. member's electorate, tell us that their losses, or condemnations, are practically nil and they claim they should not be asked to contribute to a fund from which they will not derive any benefit at all. The trouble is to differentiate between dairy cattle and beef cattle. There are difficulties in the way. I realise that a compensation fund is needed and should be provided for the dairying industry, but I can only tell the member for Nelson at this stage that the matter is still receiving the consideration of the Government with a view to evolving some practical scheme.

Item, Concession freight on fittings on railway trucks used for bulk wheat, £4,000.

Mr. ACKLAND: I had something to say last year on this item and I am sorry to see it appearing once again. It gives a very wrong impression, as there is no concession rate on fittings on railway trucks used for bulk wheat. It is the discontinuance of an impost on the wheatgrowers for many years past.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: No, it is not.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Railway Department is simply a common carrier and as such provides trucks suitable to cart everybody's produce except the farmer's, who was forced to make railway trucks suitable

for the carriage of bulk wheat. The farmer himself has had to provide the necessary fittings. He is being charged freight on them both as wheat when the trucks are loaded, and as fittings when the trucks are returned empty. Over the years the farmer has paid in this connection £461,342. I admit that during the last two years the Government has decided that the freight on the fittings was unwarranted and has discontinued charging it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is not true. The Railway Department still makes the charge, but the general taxpayer pays it.

Mr. ACKLAND: No. There is no justification for such a debit.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: There might not be any justification, but I am telling you what happened.

Mr. ACKLAND: No other customer of the Railway Department has been asked to do anything of this kind. Freight on wheat today is increased by over 80 per cent. I do not object at all to the increase, as I think that under present conditions it is fully justified.

The PREMIER: The amount is provided as a recoup to the Railway Department for the cost of freight on fittings used and sent back to the country to enable wooden trucks to be made available for the carriage of bulk wheat. Co-operative Bulk Handling provides the necessary canvas and bamboo required by the railways for constructing these special trucks.

Mr. Triat: So the member for North-East Fremantle is right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I find myself much in agreement with the member for Irwin-Moore on this item. The Railway Department should provide the necessary vehicles in which to carry its freight, but it has not been in a position to do so as far as bulk wheat is concerned. Two years ago Co-operative Bulk Handling had to pay the Railway Department's charges levied under this heading, being freight for the carriage of fittings used to make the trucks suitable to carry wheat. The Railway Department still makes the charge, as the member for Irwin-Moore should bear in mind. The department has not been prepared to forgo this freight charge, but the

difference is that instead of Co-operative Bulk Handling paying it, the Treasury pays it out of general revenue.

Mr. Ackland: Co-operative Bulk Handling did not make the payment; the individual farmers did.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Co-operative Bulk Handling paid the freight on behalf of the farmers. The Treasury now finds the money and pays it to the Railway Department and therefore it is paid by the taxpayer. We have not yet reached the point at which the Railway Department is prepared to say, "We will not charge this freight." It is being paid out of general revenue and that is why the Premier has included this item in the Estimates. If the Treasury believes that certain concession fares ought to be charged and the Railway Department does not agree, then the Treasury bears the cost. That has been the practice for years past. So do not let us get a wrong impression from the words used by the member for Irwin-Moore.

Do not let us believe that under this Government the Railway Department has taken a different view. It still believes that the people who own these fittings which are used on the trucks should pay for their cartage backwards and forwards. I do not agree with the Railway Department, and never did. I think the papers will show that I told it so. But I was neither the Treasurer nor the Minister for Railways. However, acting on behalf of the farmers, I agreed with the case submitted by Co-operative Bulk Handling that this did not appear to be a fair charge to levy. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Railway Department has not had a change of heart but still insists on payment for the cartage of these fittings, and that payment is being made by the Treasurer instead of Co-operative Bulk Handling.

[Mr. Perkins resumed the Chair.]

Item, State Electricity Commission—Loss, £330,000.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Before dealing with this matter, I would suggest that when there is such a large number of items in a Vote like this, the Chairman of Committees should call them as he would call the clauses of a Bill. Members would not then be bobbing up and down indicating

the items to which they desired to refer and the procedure would be not only more orderly but also more efficient. This item shows that the Vote for 1948-49 was £149,000, and the expenditure was £253,699. The estimate for 1949-50 is £330,000, an increase of £76,301. I would like the Treasurer to give some information about this matter, in view of the fact that quite recently the electricity and gas charges have been considerably increased. There is an estimated loss for this year, yet there was no loss that we know of when the City Council had charge of the undertaking and we were not then paying as much for electricity as we are now. I would like some explanation of the matter.

Mr. TRIAT: I would like to ask the Premier whether he can tell us the actual cost of electricity generated by the Government. Since the Government took over distribution of electricity, the cost to the consumer has increased 30 per cent. to 100 per cent., yet this year an extra deficit of £76,301 is estimated.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The loss shown last year is £253,699, and an amount of £330,000 is being allowed for this year. I am wondering whether there is some inefficiency in the management of the State Electricity Commission. I would like to ask why no report from the Commission has been laid on the Table in accordance with the Act. We do not know what the position is at all. If we continue the way we are going and there is a flat rate for electricity throughout the State, it will be very high, unless a lot of capital is written off, because the system is only in its infancy. The cost of electricity to the consumer has increased from 40 per cent. to 100 per cent., yet the deficit is expected to be increased by £76,301. I would like to know whether Mr. Edmondson is still on the Commission, and whether he is deputy chairman or vice chairman. If he is deputy chairman I feel more alarmed than ever, because it seems that we have the manager and chief electrical engineer applying to himself for instructions. The Government should be alarmed at the absence of a report. I have been looking for one in order to see how the money has been spent and why we have such a huge deficit. At the present rate, in

a few years the capital cost will be greater than it was when the foundations of the system were laid.

Mr. GRAHAM: Apart from there being no annual report available, I am at a loss to know where members can ascertain the position of this tremendous undertaking. I am unable to find any reference under the heading of public utilities or under the department of the Minister for Works, and accordingly I do not know where it can appear. It is hardly likely to be under the heading of State Trading Concerns. Therefore, we are not in a position to know whether the State Electricity Commission is expending £1,000,000 or £20,000,000 a year. I trust the Premier can give some explanation of the position. For the year 1947-48 the loss was £33,000 odd. Last year it was £253,000 odd and this year it is anticipated it will be £330,000. That is a considerable sum, especially when we take into account the fact that the charges have been substantially increased. Without the increase the loss would probably have been about half a million pounds. What is the explanation? Since the loss last year of something in excess of a quarter of a million pounds, the State Electricity Commission has taken over the distribution of electricity, or the payable side, because the Perth City Council was subsidising itself to the extent of many thousands of pounds a year through the profits it made.

As the charges have been increased the Commission should be doing even better than the Perth City Council did. It should be making both ends meet for another reason, namely, that previously every unit that was generated and supplied to the Perth City Council, was supplied at a loss. That is not the position now. It was suggested when the increased charges were made, that they would mean approximately 1s. a week to the ordinary householder. Experience has proved, however, that that estimate is wide of the mark. Many people who have discussed the matter with me say that it has meant an increase of practically 100 per cent. to them.

We have a tremendous concern showing a considerable loss, while it is increasing its charges to the public and divorcing itself from certain unprofitable sales of current. Having regard to the rapid increase in the

cost of living and, accordingly, in the basic wage, it is logical to assume that the anticipated loss of £330,000 will be nearer £400,000. I would like the Premier to give an explanation of the situation which has developed.

Mr. RODOREDA: The estimated loss of £330,000 is extraordinary when we look at the table at the back of the Estimates which gives the State Electricity Commission's own review of the situation. It is beyond my power to come anywhere near reconciling these figures; there is an extraordinary discrepancy. The Commission estimates that the sales of current, etc., will amount to £1,122,000; that sales of gas, fittings and residuals will total £440,500, and that there will be a deficiency on the system of £59,000 odd. At the bottom of the page we find a summary of the operations which shows a deficiency of £59,000 on the metropolitan system, and a head office deficiency of £3,430, while the cost of supervising country undertakings and licenses accounts for a deficiency of £4,000. On the profit side, the South-West State power scheme shows a surplus of £270, and the supervision of gas undertakings, £60. The net deficiency on the whole year is anticipated to be £66,806. Yet we find in the Revenue Estimates that the Treasurer is allowing for a loss of £330,000 on the system.

I had a deal to say about this discrepancy last year, and the final explanation was that the item for depreciation in the Commission's figures accounted for it because, not being a cash item, it was not included in the Treasurer's figures. This year the reverse is the case. The Treasurer estimates that he will be putting in £330,000 whereas the Commission estimates a deficiency of £66,000. Depreciation accounts for £177,000. If the Commission did not have to pay that it would show a profit of about £100,000. I fail to see what use these tables are to us unless there is some explanation for the discrepancies, which I cannot envisage.

Mr. BRADY: The electors in the Guildford-Midland area are concerned about the returns in regard to electricity. Certain people have told me they are paying 50 per cent. more than they were a few months ago. The portents are that the State Electricity Commission will take over the revenue which was derived by the local

authorities and used for improvements. It appears that they are going to lose that money and, in addition, have to pay extra charges for electricity. I would like a full explanation of the position. Instead of electricity costs going up they should be coming down. When a concern produces double and treble the output of previous years its costs are generally reduced, but in this instance they are rising.

The PREMIER: The increase of £76,301 is provided to meet the loss on the State Electricity Commission, pending its becoming established and earning sufficient revenue to meet current expenses. The increase in the Vote includes the increased costs of coal, wages and maintenance. This is easily one of our largest spending departments and involves hundreds of thousands of pounds in the purchase of new machinery from Britain and the Eastern States. The member for Perth and the member for Guildford-Midland mentioned the increase in rates for electricity, but our rates still compared favourably with those in other States. With this increase and with the bringing of South Fremantle into operation next year, the financial position of our electricity undertakings should be much improved. In reply to the member for Kanowna, Mr. Edmondson is a member of the Electricity Commission and I presume acts as chairman when Mr. Dumas is away.

Hon. E. Nulsen: He is vice-chairman.

The PREMIER: I think he would be deputy chairman, if there is a deputy.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is a difference between a deputy and a vice-chairman.

The PREMIER: I cannot give the member for Mt. Magnet figures of production costs, but they can be supplied later. I will make inquiries about the annual report for which several members have asked, and see what can be done to expedite its delivery to members.

Mr. GRAHAM: I move—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	21
Noes	21
	—
A tie	0
	—

AYES.

Mr. Brady
Mr. Covarley
Mr. Fox
Mr. Graham
Mr. Hawke
Mr. Hegney
Mr. Hoar
Mr. Kelly
Mr. Marshall
Mr. May
Mr. McCulloch

Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Oliver
Mr. Panton
Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Styants
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Rodoreda
(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Ackland
Mr. Bovell
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Cornell
Mr. Doney
Mr. Grayden
Mr. Hall
Mr. Hill
Mr. Leslie
Mr. Mann

Mr. McDonald
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Murray
Mr. Nalder
Mr. Nimmo
Mr. North
Mr. Seward
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Wild
Mr. Brand
(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.

Mr. Wise
Mr. Smith

NOES.

Mr. Watts
Sir N. Keenan.

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the "Noes."

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. RODOREDA: In replying, the Premier said nearly word for word what he said last year; that the commission was being established and we should give it time to get on its feet. The expenditure involved is from the Capital Account and has nothing to do with Revenue. How can the Premier say that in a few years' time the commission will show a profit when on its own figures—disregarding depreciation—it will show a profit of £100,000 this year? It expects a deficiency of £59,000 for the year, and as against that there is £177,400 for depreciation. How can the Premier tell us he has to find £330,000 for this commission when he has not to find the money for the depreciation and the commission expects to be £100,000 on the right side, as it should be. I hope the Premier or the Minister for Works will give the Committee an explanation of this.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Obviously the complete establishment of the commission will not be easy. We know of the drastic alterations that are taking place and members will have to be tolerant. A number of misleading and improper statements have been made in this House about the commission and particularly about its general manager. I do not think it very proper to do that but I will be happy later on, should the statements be continued, to make a statement

myself which I think should effectively stop any further attacks in that direction. These are not my Estimates, although I realise that the Committee is entitled to a statement upon the position. There has been, for a number of years, a loss of £140,000 to the railways before the Commission took over. I do not intend to try to clear up the position by way of explaining the Premier's Estimates, as I will need to collect a good deal of information. I shall however make a statement on the subject.

Three or four members have said that there has been something like 100 per cent. increase in the cost of electricity to the public. That is entirely wrong and I imagine that those who make the statement know it to be wrong. The authoritative statement, issued in the Press, was that the difference, in the rough would be an increase of something like 30 per cent. and members can rely upon it that that 30 per cent. is pretty well correct. I do not say that it is precisely correct but it is very close to it. I will be glad to get the information, and when I come to the item in my own Estimates I will cover the points that have been made.

Mr. RODOREDA: I invited the Minister for Works into this discussion to clear up a point or two that had me worried. However, I do not know that I am very much further ahead now.

The Minister for Works: Of course you are not.

Mr. RODOREDA: Surely someone can give me the information I am seeking. Are we as a Committee to pass an item of £330,000 as a loss to a concern that, on its own figures, shows that it expects to make a profit? Apparently the Treasurer is unable to explain it away and the Minister for Works sidestepped the issue. The Minister for Housing has now come in with a "Hansard" and with this round-table conference we may be able to get some information in the matter. It is absurd to have two conflicting tables before us and expect us to pass an item such as this without comment. If the Premier cannot supply the information he should report progress. The tables I refer to are at the back of the Estimates.

The Attorney General: That summary deals only with operations.

Mr. RODOREDA: What are we dealing with?

The Attorney General: There is no allowance in the summary for depreciation.

Mr. RODOREDA: There is an allowance of £177,000 for depreciation.

The Attorney General: But depreciation is not shown in the summary. That is purely for operations.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: It is a pity you did not have an operation.

Mr. RODOREDA: It would have been far better if the Attorney General had stayed asleep. We are dealing with operations, not capital expenditure or anything else. We are dealing with estimates and revenue.

The Attorney General: There has not been included an item for depreciation in the operational accounts and it must be taken into account.

Mr. RODOREDA: If I thought the Attorney General could explain this to me, I would let him do so. There is an item of £177,000 for depreciation.

The Attorney General: It is not shown in the operational account.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is easy to see that the Attorney General has not taken a course in accountancy. There is a summary of operations and on top is shown the depreciation on the metropolitan accounts at £177,000 and the deficiency £59,000. Therefore, disregarding depreciation, the Commission would make a profit of £100,000 on that one metropolitan item. This Committee certainly requires some explanation on the point and the Premier should report progress if he cannot give it to us.

Item, Subsidy to Australian Blue Asbestos Limited, etc., £3,000.

Mr. OLIVER: I would like the Premier to give me some information on this item. I want to know what is meant by development and transport of asbestos production.

The PREMIER: Towards assisting the development of the blue asbestos industry at Wittenoom Gorge, the State and Commonwealth Governments have agreed to subsidise transport. On this basis on sea freight of asbestos, Port Samson to Fremantle, an amount of 10s. per ton is paid direct to the

company, and the State and the Commonwealth Governments each share one half. Road haulage from Port Samson to Wittenoom Gorge is 27s. per ton and that is to be shared equally by the State and the Commonwealth. On goods transported by rail from Meekatharra to Wittenoom Gorge, excluding building materials required for houses, a payment of 10s. per ton is to be paid fully by the State. The minimum quantity of transport is not to exceed 40 tons per month and the route is not to be used more than eight months out of the 12. A subsidy of 20s. per ton is also paid on asbestos hauled from Wittenoom Gorge to Meekatharra. This was an arrangement, I think, that existed between the previous Government and the company.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Premier gave that explanation when I asked him about the State Shipping Service on Item 51. I do not know whether this is a duplication or not but I cannot see how both items can refer to the same thing. There seems to be some mistake somewhere. The transport from Meekatharra to Wittenoom Gorge and return has very rarely been taken advantage of because it has been difficult to get a permit from the Transport Board. The manager of the State Shipping Service has always objected very strongly when anything of this nature was put up, so that he could handle the cargo. Let him have a go. Why give it to road transport? Very little money could be paid out in that respect. I think the bulk of this item is paid out in subsidies for the transport of asbestos by ship.

Item, Expenses, Salary, Liaison Officer—Sydney, £1,450.

Mr. KELLY: I notice there is a sharp rise in the salary of this officer, as compared to that paid to the officer in Melbourne. Could the Premier give a reason for the disparity?

The PREMIER: This amount is to pay the salaries and expenses of the Sydney officer attending to State shipping requirements from New South Wales to Western Australia. The Commonwealth Government has been paying portion of the expenses of the Melbourne officer, which would account for the difference.

Mr. HEGNEY: Why the necessity to increase this amount when we have had the assurance repeated in this House that the

Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping does all the necessary work for the transporting of supplies from the Eastern States to this State?

The PREMIER: It must be evident to the hon. member that the State requires liaison officers in both Melbourne and Sydney from which places we obtain so much of the State's requirements of material. They attend to the shipping which in these days of shortages and hold-ups is necessary in order to get our goods away.

Mr. Hegney: These liaison officers are the responsible persons to perform the work?

The PREMIER: Yes, they are responsible for ensuring that the goods we order are shipped away from Melbourne and Sydney to this State.

Mr. Hegney: What does the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping do?

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows what she does. I do not know whether the hon. member's intention at this late hour is to hold up the discussion on these items, but the Honorary Minister does what she can to assist our merchants, businessmen, etc., to obtain goods from the Eastern States and, once she places the order, the liaison officers in Melbourne and Sydney do their part in getting them away to this State.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Could the Premier tell the Committee how long these officers have been operating in Melbourne and Sydney?

The PREMIER: I could not, but they were operating before this Government came into power.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Thank you very much.

The PREMIER: Is that the information the hon. member desired?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Yes.

Item, Emergency Aerial Transport—Perishable Goods, £1,000.

Mr. RODOREDA: I am not so much concerned with the amount of this item, but this will be the only occasion when I will have an opportunity of discussing this subsidy on aerial transport for the North-West. I do not like to see this item included in the Revenue Estimates because we were given to understand, when we passed a Bill

giving the control to the State Transport Board, that the subsidies were to be paid by that body but as there are no returns from it, or likely to be, we have not the faintest idea whether it has paid any subsidies. I ask the Premier to give consideration to making this subsidy a permanent feature of his North-West policy. Every summer there is an outcry from the people in the North that this subsidy be put into operation, but it is very seldom it is paid before December and it always ceases before it should.

I assure the Premier if the subsidy is made permanent it will not be abused because no-one will pay aerial freight on perishables when they can get them transported by ship a lot cheaper. Very little extra money would be required for a permanent subsidy and it would be a boon to the people in the North. Port Hedland or Onslow cannot grow vegetables because of the lack of water and because they have only beach sand in which to grow them. While the subsidy is paid all the year round to places like Nullagine, the North-West centres are denied that privilege. If the Premier cannot make the subsidy permanent, I ask him to commence paying the subsidy earlier in the year and continue it for a longer period.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I support the remarks by the member for Pilbara. I want the Premier to give an undertaking that when he approves of this subsidy he will be prepared to exceed the Vote for the forthcoming year. I think he has that right and, on most occasions when an application for extension of the subsidy is made, the Minister for Transport has agreed to it. It so happens that the Transport Board notifies the local road board that this concession will cease at the end of a particular month. Then there would be general meetings and conferences. Urgent wires would be sent to the Transport Board and to members for the districts concerned, and finally the people in the North would be notified that the subsidy was to be discontinued from a certain date. Later on, the Government would agree to the proposition. It is true that the Government has extended the concession to inland towns, but that does not cover the whole of the North-West. The water at Onslow is as salty as the sea and vegetables cannot be grown there. The same applies at Broome

where the bore water is so salty that not only can gardens not be established; but, in order that people may have a bath, the water has to be filtered through charcoal and other means adopted as well. Even so, the water affects the hair.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That would not worry the Premier or me!

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: People cannot clean their teeth with the water because it is so salty and smells so much. There is every necessity for a large increase in the subsidy proposed, and I hope the Premier will agree to excess the Vote.

The PREMIER: It is true, as stated, that representations have been made to the Government for the prolongation of the subsidy, and those representations have met with sympathetic consideration.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: And some success.

The PREMIER: I have some appreciation of the difficulties that confront people in the Kimberleys and the North-West with regard to the need for perishable vegetables and fresh fruit. My visit to the North afforded me some indication of the requirements in that respect. All the State ships running on the North-West coast are fitted with refrigeration and, with the return of the m.v. "Koolinda" to the run, we should be able to provide for all the requirements of northern ports. If I have instances brought under my notice of people suffering through lack of these essential requirements, I shall be prepared to give consideration to the extension of the subsidy.

Item, Estimated Cost of Basic Wage Increases, £400,000.

Mr. HEGNEY: Has the Premier details disclosing how this amount is arrived at? I am convinced that with the present trend the Vote is rather conservative, because since the 1st July, 1948 the basic wage has risen from £5 5s. 9d. to £6 19s. 2d., an increase of 17s. 5d. a week. If the Minister dealing with price control carries on as at present, prices will continue to increase and the basic wage to rise until the end of next June. I know this is not the item upon which I may discuss price-fixing, but nevertheless prices have a direct bearing on the basic wage. I suggest, therefore, that the Premier looks

into the administration of the price-fixing machinery with a view to doing something to stem the continual upward spiral of commodity prices. Recently I made pointed references to the prices of meat and potatoes, and I am sure there will soon be an agitation for an increase in the price of newspapers.

The basic wage is increasing all the time. I say without fear of successful contradiction that it would be much higher today if the actual prices of certain commodities paid by consumers were reflected in the retail index figures compiled by the statistician. In the circumstances, I ask the Premier upon what basis the estimate of £400,000 is made. I do not know what the figures will disclose in the next period, but if there is to be any reliability placed on the statistician's figures, I have no doubt the basic wage will show another increase, and it will go on indefinitely.

The PREMIER: The information supplied to me sets out that owing to the prevailing conditions it was considered advisable to show the estimated increase in the basic wage for the current year in a bulk figure. As the approved increase becomes payable, the amount will be charged against the appropriate Vote of the department concerned. Some figure has to be arrived at and an estimate made. The figure disclosed in the Estimates is the same as that provided last year.

Mr. Graham: There was no expenditure last year.

The PREMIER: The amount was then debited to the departments, whereas we have now provided for it in bulk. I have no figures with me to indicate how the £400,000 is made up.

Mr. Hegney: A rise in the basic wage must be expected.

The PREMIER: Yes, and provision is made for it.

Mr. Hegney: Then there will be increases in prices.

Mr. GRAHAM: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

Item, Kimberley Regional Advisory Committee expenses, £250.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: The Premier knows the history of the committee, why it was appointed and the request made that it be elective, to which the Premier did not agree. He agreed to the formation of this nominated committee and gave a promise that further consideration would be given to the request that it be made elective. It would appear that he has forgotten that promise. The people in the Kimberley district are discontented that the committee is not elective. They also complain that they are unaware of the resolutions passed by the committee and that they do not know what decisions have been forwarded to the Government for its consideration. They also say that the resolutions are carried by the inner circle of civil servants on the committee.

The PREMIER: I am surprised to hear the member for Kimberley say that consideration has not been given to the recommendations of this advisory committee. I have seen some of their reports and know that consideration has been given to them by the North-West Development Committee. When I set up the advisory committee, I realised that its members would have long distances to travel. I therefore discussed the matter with the member for Kimberley. The members of the advisory committee reside in various districts in the Kimberleys and were selected from members of the various road boards. These members are responsible persons elected by the ratepayers. Therefore I consider the member for Kimberley has no reason for complaint as to the manner in which the committee was set up. I will make some investigations as to why some of its recommendations have been turned down, but I assure the hon. member that the North-West Development Committee and I, as Minister for the North-West, appreciate the committee's work and any recommendations made by it will receive full consideration.

Item, Chamber of Mines, payment re gold stealing detection, £1,000.

Mr. McCULLOCH: Four members of the Police Force, an inspector, a sergeant and two constables, are allocated to this work, yet we find that the Chamber of Mines is to be paid £1,000 for its efforts to supplement those of the Police Force.

We know that shopkeepers in the metropolitan area engage detectives unofficially, but they are not getting any subsidy for that purpose.

The PREMIER: I think the member for Hannans does not appreciate the position. The amount is provided as a partial recoup to the Chamber of Mines for the expense incurred by it in helping to detect gold stealing. The chamber will receive one half of the stolen gold recovered, but not exceeding £2,000 in the calendar year. After all, the gold belongs to it. Continued pressure was being brought to bear upon the Government to assist the mining industry in various ways and this was a suggestion made to me by the Chamber of Mines to which I agreed.

Hon. E. NULSEN: With regard to the item, concessional rail freight on Norseman pyrites—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The last item is No. 88, Royal Humane Society.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Cannot I ask a question with regard to the item I mentioned?

The CHAIRMAN: No. It is an amount that was expended. There is no estimate in respect of it.

The Premier: In any case, I have no information to give the hon. member.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12-50 a.m. (Wednesday).