

boarding-houses. The complaint regarding the extension of hours can easily be overcome. It was never suggested in another place, so far as I am aware, that all that was necessary to do that was to get an agreement or an award of the Arbitration Court. The present law provides the way out of the difficulty and to say that these people should be exempt and given a free hand is too drastic altogether. That gives the employers all they want. I hope the Committee will not agree to the Council's amendment.

Question put and negatived; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3, New Clause.—Add the following clause, to stand as No. 19:—“Notwithstanding any of the provisions of the principal Act, it shall be lawful for a shopkeeper or his assistant or representative at any time to sell petrol, benzine, or other motor spirit or any part or accessory of a mechanically propelled vehicle to travellers for the purpose of enabling them to continue any journey which they could not otherwise continue.”

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the Council's amendment be agreed to.

Under the existing law, these emergency requirements could not be supplied.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will not oppose the amendment, but it strikes me as being supremely silly to specially single out certain shops because an unfortunate motor car driver might be hung up for want of benzine. Would any sane department or official charged with the administration of the Act take proceedings against a storekeeper for supplying petrol in an emergency?

The Colonial Secretary: You never know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not any of our Acts are administered on the strict letter; they are administered with discretion and judgment. If this amendment be wise, then there are 50 different directions in which it would be advisable to make similar provisions. However, as the Premier would say, the amendment will do no harm.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

Reasons for not agreeing to Council's Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 adopted, and a Message accordingly transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 11.18 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 6th December, 1921.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor General, in pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act of 1904, the thirty-first report for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1921, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—WHEAT, FREMANTLE STEVEDORING.

Hon. F. A. BAGLIN asked the Minister for Education: 1, Is it a fact that the handling of wheat at Fremantle of the 1921-22 harvest is confined to “bona fide” stevedoring firms only? 2, What is the Government's definition of a “bona fide” stevedoring firm? 3, In the event of the Fremantle lumpers submitting a tender for this work, will such tender receive the same consideration as those submitted by other bona fide firms? 4, If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Tenders were invited for right of stevedoring wheat vessels at Fremantle from recognised and bona fide stevedores only. 2, As is customary in the trade and as defined with the advice of the Wheat Marketing Advisory Committee. 3, A tender has been received from the Fremantle lumpers, and this will be submitted for consideration of the advisory committee. 4, See No. 3.

MOTION—UNIVERSITY FEES.

To disallow Senate Statute.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [4.34]: I move—

That the scale of fees and bursaries established by the University Senate, under Statute No. 19 of the University of Western Australia, for attendance of the students at lectures and classes, be disallowed.

Ten years ago interest was created throughout the State in the establishment of a university, by which it was sought to extend the many branches of knowledge and learning. Prior to that, we had educational facilities in the way of a School of Mines and technical schools. The first technical school was established in Perth in 1900, and three years later the School of Mines at Kalgoorlie was established, and students at both of these institutions were called upon to pay fees. Subsequently the fees were abolished, and the instruction was imparted free of cost. This conferred a great boon upon the many students attending those schools, who were at a disadvantage through being called upon to make sacrifices in order to pay the fees asked of them. The ideal of a university which had been cherished by many people was realised in 1911, and the advent of this free institution was heralded throughout the State. Western Australia then had a free system from the kindergarten to the University, the consummation of the University representing the coping stone of our education system. To-day interest is centred in the desire of the Senate of the University to impose fees upon the students. The University Act was passed in the year 1911, and the preamble sets out among other things the following:—

Whereas it is desirable that special encouragement and assistance should be afforded those who may be hindered in the acquisition of sound knowledge and useful learning by lack of opportunity or means—

The Act vested in the University Senate, as the governing authority, certain powers to be exercised in the manner they considered to be in the best interests of the institution and to promote its general welfare. Section 57 provided that there should be paid from the Consolidated Revenue of the State a sum of £13,500 per annum to cover the expenses of management and control. It was further provided that the benefits and advantages of the University were to be conferred on women equally with men. I mention this fact because in many other parts of the world women were denied the privileges which were accorded them under our Act. As the institution was free, it was to be free to everyone. The measure was passed in 1911 and, from that year until 1920, a sum of £13,500 was annually paid to the University Senate. The Senate, however, finding themselves unable to meet their responsibilities and to carry on the work of the University, last year applied to the Government for a sum of £5,000. The Government came to their rescue by granting a sum of £1,500. I believe that the opinions of members of the Senate were sharply divided as to whether the sum granted was to be the maximum amount made available. I have in mind the fact that, when the Technical School was established in 1900, the expenses of that institution were between £900 and

£1,000, but in 1910 the expenses were approximately £10,000. The natural assumption was that the increase in the vote to be granted to the University would be in proportion to the increase in the population of the State. After ten years the institution has received an additional sum of £1,500 and the Senate, in order to get out of their difficulties, have cast around for methods by which to raise additional funds. I believe they have been knocking at the door of the Government very frequently, but with little result and, having failed, they decided to exercise the powers conferred by Section 31 of the Act which enabled them to make statutes which, after receiving their approval, were to be laid upon the Table of both Houses. On the 24th November, Statute No. 19 was laid on the Table of the House. This statute seeks to impose on students fees for attendance at the various classes and lectures. The Senate certainly have acted quite within their rights. They are not seeking to establish any precedent; in fact I believe the whole of the institutions in the Eastern States impose fees. Therefore, I have no complaint on the score that the University authorities have exercised their right by instituting fees in order to square their ledger. These fees range from 25s. per course per term to 16 guineas per annum for three courses. Subsection 2 of Section 33 sets out that either House of Parliament may annul any statute laid on the Table, and the opportunity now presents itself through the motion I have moved for members to express their views on the question whether this statute, seeking to impose fees, should be annulled or allowed to pass. If the statute is annulled, the activities of the University may be curtailed. This would be a very bad advertisement for the State. The Senate are in this position: They are not like the Government who can square a deficit by issuing Treasury bills. They have to secure the cash necessary to carry on, and apparently this is their only method of raising the requisite funds. Certainly a few worthy citizens have come to the rescue of the University from time to time and assisted in finding a way of raising additional funds. I understand that a limited sum has been secured by way of fees for graduation, examination and matriculation. The score in this respect, however, is very limited, and like other institutions and people, they have been hit hard owing to the purchasing power of the sovereign having decreased. When they set out to purchase scientific instruments, chemicals and other requisites, they discovered that the value of the vote of £13,500 in 1911 did not pertain at the present time. I do not think the Senate can be charged with lavish expenditure of their funds. Indeed, they may rather be charged with leaning towards the niggardly side. The University professors and lecturers, I understand, have not received increases in their respective salaries during the years of the war, though the contrary is the fact in the case of

primary and secondary school teachers, who have from time to time been granted increments. Indeed, I believe that the University and the School of Mines have had great difficulty in retaining the services of their teaching staff. Now, the Senate having realised the position and submitted this scale of fees, I ask for the withholding of their imposition. My chief concern is the fear of driving out of the University or the School of Mines, as the case may be, many valuable students now attending those institutions. Parents in the country may have a bright child and stint themselves, even to the extent of privation, to send that child to the metropolitan area in order to attend the free University. If the fees set forth are imposed, such parents may be prevented from sending their child to the University. We set out originally with the ideal of free education from the kindergarten to the University, and therefore I now suggest that the Government should come to the aid of the University Senate with a further grant. Many of the University students, I have reason to believe, are not living with their parents, and therefore have to pay board; and it is especially for such students that I ask consideration. One of the great lessons of the war was that we should be self-contained, that the national requirements should be met by the nation; and I maintain that that end can be attained only by harnessing the brains of the community, rich and poor alike. The students are a distinct asset to the community, and should receive every consideration.

Hon. J. Duffell: Why do you wish the bursaries to be disallowed?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am not opposed to the additional bursaries. On the contrary, I should like them to be granted by the score. There is nothing more attractive to the student at school than to learn that there are numerous bursaries available for him or her. The fact acts as an incentive to the children to go forward in their studies with the object of proving their possession of special talents, and so reaching the University.

Hon. J. Duffell: In that case, why do you move that the bursaries be disallowed?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: My motion is being moved with the object of obtaining from hon. members an expression of opinion as to whether they approve of the view, the niggardly view I contend, taken by the Government, the niggardly decision to stint the University to the extent of £5,000.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Suppose the Government have not the money?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: There is a proposal on the Notice Paper, which I presume will be discussed later to-day, for the establishment of a standing committee on public works. The expenditure on that committee must considerably exceed £5,000 per annum. I would rather see that money go in bursaries, or granted as an assistance to the University Senate. Whilst on the subject of the University, I desire to draw attention to the fine opening that exists for that insti-

tution to establish correspondence classes, which will reach students residing at a distance from the metropolitan area, and give them also an opportunity to acquire higher knowledge. The International Correspondence Schools advertise largely in all parts of the world, and have on their books numerous students, who periodically send their papers and work for correction. The tuition fees paid go out of the State, and frequently out of the Commonwealth. If our University could cater for that class of student, it would be very advisable to do so. Several members of this House are also members of the University Senate, and I would like to learn from them whether the fact that the University has never sought to reach that class of student is due to lack of the necessary financial resources. I consider that the motion is worthy of the earnest consideration of hon. members. I contend that the Parliament which passed the University Act and which voted an annual endowment of £13,500 to the Senate is the factor which should decide whether the scale of fees shall be permitted to stand or shall be disallowed.

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

BILL—AUCTIONEERS.

Read a third time, and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th November.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.55]: After the debate which has already taken place on this Bill, and the light thrown upon it by various hon. members, very little is left to be said in its favour. The most important clauses of the measure are Nos. 2, 12, and 13. Clause 2 provides for the appointment of the committee. Clause 12 makes provision for the reference to the committee of railways, tramways, or other public works the estimated cost of which exceeds £20,000. The provisions of Clause 13 are fairly lengthy. I take it that although other public works are referred to in paragraph (a) of Subclause 1 of Clause 12, that reference is not intended to be limited to other public works connected with, or in the nature of, railways and tramways.

The Minister for Education: No. The paragraph says, "Every Government railway, tramway, or other public work."

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am looking at the matter from a strict interpretation point of view. It might possibly be held that the words "other public works" refer to other public works being in the nature of railways or tramways. However, from what has been stated, I think it is clearly intended that the scope of the measure shall include every public work of an estimated

cost of £20,000 or over. The Bill naturally causes one to reflect upon the duties and responsibilities of Ministers. When a Minister takes office he certainly assumes various responsibilities. In connection with his office he has the administration of his department. So far as private members know, the usual course in connection with any large schemes coming before a Minister is to refer them to Cabinet or Executive Council for approval. Before such a scheme is submitted to either Cabinet or Executive Council, it has to run the gauntlet of the heads of departments, and the Minister has been assisted in his recommendation either for or against the scheme by the views and reports submitted to him from the heads of departments, who are competent to form a judgment. If they are not so competent, then it would be necessary for the Minister, as part of the responsibility of his office, to find out everything that he possibly can to support the recommendation which he may make. If he fails to do so, then it would be fair to say that the Minister was lacking in his duty. Now, as regards railway construction, we know that no line is ever built without first a Bill coming before both Houses of Parliament to authorise the construction; and an opportunity is then given to members of each House to decide whether they will give sanction to the passing of the measure. As the authorisation for a railway requires the assent of both Houses, obviously there is not the same need for a public works committee to inquire into those matters as there would appear to be from what has been said in support of the Bill. A conflict of views has arisen as to what occurred on a previous occasion when a similar Bill came before the House. One has to look at what are the chief avenues of expenditure at the present time. With a depleted revenue the prospects of any big undertaking are more remote than was the case when conditions were flourishing. If we had an overflowing Treasury there would be greater reason for getting these matters referred to the proposed committee. But one has to look at the practical position in respect of that committee. What have they to do? They have to consider and report upon these matters. Are they not usurping the duties of the Minister in charge of questions coming within the scope of the proposed committee? The members of that committee would call evidence and be guided very largely by those competent to express opinions. Surely if men are appointed to positions in the Government service their views would be regarded with some weight by the committee! If, then, the committee have to be guided by those opinions, they will be doing not much more than the present railway advisory board are doing. The committee is to be given authority to call in assessors and to summon witnesses. All that would mean expenditure. It is not as though the proposed committee would be composed of experts. The men constituting that committee would be unqualified as experts in the

work that would come before them for consideration, and therefore would be bound to be guided by the opinions of men expert in that work. That being so, I cannot see the value of the services to be rendered by the proposed committee. In recent years we have increased the remuneration paid to the Commissioner of Railways, on the score of his increased responsibilities. By the appointment of the proposed committee we should be taking away from the Commissioner much of the responsibility for which he has been receiving the extra remuneration. Also we would be taking away from Ministers much of their responsibility. I was very much struck with what Mr. Kirwan said. One cannot but be influenced by the conviction that the appointment of the proposed committee is bound to result in added expenditure. It will be not merely the fees paid to the members of the committee, but it will be all the incidental expenses. There will be the cost of a staff, the cost of bringing witnesses, the cost of assessors; all this expense would mount up to a considerable sum per annum, and would offset any advantages that might be derived by the appointment of the proposed committee.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: One Federal inspection alone cost over £6,000.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is a very good instance.

Hon. J. Duffell: How much was saved thereby?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is a question whether anything was saved.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The work is not likely to be constructed for many years to come.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There are other instances. There is the case of the public works committee appointed in New South Wales.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are not such committees to be found in every State?

The Minister for Education: Certainly in Victoria and South Australia.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There was a glaring instance in New South Wales, that of the construction of the joinery works, a little distance out of Sydney. By some mistake those works were estimated to cost something under the prescribed amount differentiating those works which had not to be referred to the public works committee from those which the committee were empowered to inquire into. As the work progressed it was found that the prescribed amount had been exceeded, and so it became necessary that the work should be referred to the public works committee. Very curious evidence came out at the inquiry. One can readily see that there might be other instances of a similar nature arising from time to time, instances of the cost being quite legitimately estimated at less than the £20,000 prescribed in the Bill, and so the work is proceeded with without reference to the committee. This would be taking from the Minister the whole of the responsibility for the authorising of any of those works.

The Minister for Education: Parliament, not Ministers, authorises work.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It depends on what the work may be. Certain responsibilities are assumed by Ministers. This particular duty should be placed on the right shoulders.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is Parliament, is it not?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In some cases; in others it is for the Minister.

The Minister for Education: The Minister does not pass these amounts for public works; Parliament does that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I admit that. But certain recommendations are made by Ministers which serve to guide Parliament in coming to a decision.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did Parliament authorise the expenditure of £200,000 on the "Kangaroo"?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Frequently we are asked to foot the bill after the State is committed to certain expenditure.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Will not this proposed committee prevent that?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think so, because the committee will be guided by exactly the same evidence as the Minister relies upon in coming to a decision. I do not see that the cost involved in making these inquiries in regard to public works, limited as they will be for years to come, is likely to be justified. We cannot lose sight of the fact that current works are exempt. This exemption is very important. It shows clearly that any necessity which might have existed in former years for the appointment of the committee ceases to exist because of the lack of funds. I have come to the conclusion that instead of the appointment of the proposed committee proving wise, it might prove otherwise. Parliament has authorised certain increases in the salaries of responsible official heads. If we are going to appoint the proposed committee it will remove certain of those responsibilities for which extra remuneration is being paid. The extra remuneration, in my opinion, should be reduced to meet, in some measure, the cost of the proposed committee. Such a committee would involve additional expenditure without sufficient compensating advantages. I must oppose the second reading.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.14]: The Minister has said that the Bill comes here with the full approval of all sections of another place. That is not so. There are in another place members who have spoken against the Bill, and who cannot see any necessity for it. Therefore I combat the statement that it has the unanimous approval of all sections of another place. It is true there were no divisions on the Bill in another place; but that can be said of many other Bills which by no means had the unanimous support of members of the Assembly. It has been stated also by the Leader of the House that the Bill differs largely from the Bills of 1911 and 1912. Fundamentally,

however, the principles are the same. The objects are almost identical, with the exception that this Bill proposes to go more into existing and working concerns than the previous Bills. It has also been said that it is the fourth Bill of a similar character. That is correct. You, Sir, had the honour of introducing a similar measure some years ago but it did not reach this place. In 1911 the Bill, although debated in another place, was not divided upon, but in this Chamber it was debated at some length, and an amendment was moved that it be read that day six months. Out of the 25 members who voted on that occasion there are only two in the Chamber to-day who voted for the amendment, namely, Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Hamersley. Of the Noes I think there remain three in the Chamber. In 1912 when a similar Bill was introduced it passed the Assembly without a division. If hon. members will turn up "Hansard" for 1912, page 2871, they will find that the present Premier, who was then in opposition, spoke strongly against the Bill and said there was no necessity for it.

Hon. T. Moore: You had good Ministers then.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The late Mr. Frank Wilson, the present Minister for Works, and those big guns in the Government all expressed the opinion that there was no necessity for the Bill. There was no division in another place and the Bill came through to this Chamber, which was the final line of resistance.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It has not altered much since.

Hon. J. CORNELL: When the Bill came before us, Mr. Moss again moved that it be read that day six months. He and Mr. Drew were the only two members who spoke on the Bill, and the House divided. It was recognised that there was no use in debating the Bill because the numbers were up. By a somewhat strange coincidence exactly the same number of members voted on that motion as had voted on the previous occasion, namely 25.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What is the forecast upon this Bill?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Those who supported the motion for the Bill to be read that day six months increased by two in number, making 17 in all, and those who voted for the second reading numbered eight instead of 10. Of members who took part in that division only five remain in the House who voted for the motion, and only four who voted against it. Neither the 1911 nor the 1912 Bill as introduced by the Labour Party, was of party significance and found no place on the general platform of the party. Hon. members were free to vote as they thought fit. Never during my connection with the Labour Party was any place found on the general platform for these measures. The 1911 measure had its genesis in the mind of Mr. W. D. Johnson, then Minister for Works, who introduced the Bill immediately after

the return of the Labour Party in 1911. The Leader of the House has advanced reasons why the Bills were rejected in 1911 and 1912, and why the Bill now before us should be carried. He pointed out that the vote on both earlier Bills was practically taken on the figures quoted by Mr. Moss. That gentleman had stated that our trading concerns for the year 1911 after taking into consideration working expense, maintenance, etc., left a clear profit of £753,800. That amount was approximately £5,000 short of meeting the interest bill at that stage. At that time the term "trading concerns" was used. To-day the term "public utilities" is used. The Leader of the House says that the public generally were perfectly satisfied that there was no need for a change because the trading concerns were buoyant, and were almost meeting the interest bill. Several members were referred to by the Leader of the House as having agreed that the position set up by Mr. Moss was a valid reason why those earlier Bills should go out. After a lapse of all these years, we find that the reason advanced for the passing of the Bill now before us is that the interest bill on public utilities last year was £1,913,628, and the surplus revenue from that source after allowing for working expenses and maintenance, but not interest, was £613,515, showing a shortage of £1,300,000. Because the position has changed, the Leader of the House puts that forward as a reason that the Bill should be passed. I take it as a reason why we should not pass the Bill. If my inquiries are correct, this Public Works Committee Bill is based upon the Acts passed in other States for the purpose of inquiring into the question of whether or not new works are necessary. The Bill now before us appears to have for its object an inquiry into the working of our railways and public utilities and as to why they have gone to the bad £1,300,000. I fail to see what purpose this Bill will serve towards altering that position.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You might recommend selling them as State trading concerns.

Hon. J. CORNELL: State trading concerns are not in question. Take our railways, for instance. Under a special Act of Parliament the management of the railways is vested in a Commissioner. The Commissioner cannot be removed during his term of office except by the resolution of both Houses of Parliament, and he is appointed for five years at a very good salary. It has been the function of past Commissioners to endeavour to so manage the railways as to make ends meet. Would this public works committee inquire into the management of the railways by the Commissioner whose appointment has been confirmed by Parliament and who cannot be removed except by Parliament? Would the Commissioner allow such an inquiry? If he did, he should be sacked without notice. He should at once tell the Government he was put where he is to run the railways and endeavour to make ends meet, and that if his

work was not satisfactory they should get somebody else to carry it out.

Hon. T. Moore: If his work cannot stand investigation, he should not be there.

Hon. J. CORNELL: A move should be made for his dismissal from office and the whole question should be thrashed out. The Commissioner is drawing £2,500 or £3,000 a year, and if he tolerates a few politicians inquiring into the working of his railways he is not worthy of the position he holds.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If he knows his job he will order them off the premises.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In justice to the Commissioner, it should be remembered that we have heard the Minister say repeatedly that the position regarding the railways is not peculiar to Western Australia, but the abnormal difference between profit and loss is to be found not only throughout the railways of Australia, but throughout every part of the civilised world where railways are run. The Minister has informed the House that this question is one that has been puzzling, and will continue to puzzle for a long time to come, the best brains in the railway services of the world to-day. I agree with that contention, but is the Public Works Committee going to solve such a position? I think it is nonsense to suggest that such will be the position.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: The committee could help.

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is another public utility which will probably come under the purview of the committee. I refer to the water supply and sewerage operations. Dealing with the goldfields water supply, I think the financial position is pretty good, and I do not think there is much to complain of regarding the way the users of that supply have met their obligations. In any case, the position regarding the goldfields water supply does not need much investigation. Then there is the great metropolitan area and its water supply. If all the evidence necessary has not been obtained to-day, after experts have come from the Eastern States and conducted inquiries, then I fail to see how a committee, such as that proposed, could bring such information forward. We have it on the authority of the Minister for Works, that the necessary information is available and that he would be prepared to go on with the scheme to-morrow and provide a permanent water supply for the city of Perth and the surrounding districts, if only he had the money. It is not information that the Minister for Works requires, but the money to carry out the necessary works. If the proposed committee could find that necessary money, I would be inclined to support the Bill, but I do not think it will be of advantage in that direction. Another public utility is the electricity supply. I think I have a hazy recollection of a Bill being passed by the House in the last hours of a session, fixing the control of that supply somewhat on the same basis as that of the railways.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It was the biggest mistake they ever made in their lives.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I believe the only reason why the electricity supply is not paying its way at the present time is that an agreement was entered into between the Perth City Council and the Government on terms which will never admit of it paying. It cannot pay until we increase the metropolitan area by half, and extend the electricity supply accordingly. If such is the position, will the appointment of the Public Works Committee have any effect in determining the contract between the Government and the Perth City Council? Then there is the question of the tramways. In 1911 the tramways did not belong to the Crown. To-day the position is different and as a result we were rendered last year about the worst tramway system in Australia.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They spent £40,000 out of revenue.

Hon. J. Ewing: There was a loss of £3,500 last year.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Surely it is not necessary to have this committee inquiring into the workings of the tramways. If the figures are not satisfactory and the financial ends are not being made to meet as they should be, then it simply means that there is another man I would put on the list.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But that is the Commissioner!

Hon. J. CORNELL: He delegates his authority to another person.

Hon. A. H. Panton: At any rate, the Commissioner is the responsible head of the concern.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have dealt with practically the whole of our big public utilities. There still remain the ferries which, however, constitute a very small item. Those I have dealt with are the four biggest concerns. The sooner we hand over the tramways and water supply and sewerage to boards, or the municipality, the better it will be for those concerned and for the administration of the State as well. If that were done, then we would get within measurable distance of the position indicated by Mr. Sanderson, when we shall have unification. These are public utilities which the Government should hand over to boards. In New South Wales, the Government run tramways in Sydney, but that is the only State in the Commonwealth, in addition to Western Australia, where the State Government run such a public utility. The Fremantle municipality runs its own trams, and the same applies to Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne, and in those centres they get as good service as we receive here. If the tramways were placed under a metropolitan board, the vexatious question of where tramway extensions are to go would be more equitably decided than if they were left in the hands of one man, as in the case of the tramway extension to Como. It has been suggested that in that particular episode, this Bill had its birth. Regarding new works, when the 1911

and 1912 Bills were introduced there were many railways that required construction. At that particular time, I laid it down, and it will be found from "Hansard" that I adhered to my declaration throughout that session, that I would support every proposal brought forward for the construction of agricultural railways. I think I am right in saying, however, that the railway lines already authorised cannot be built within the next seven years.

Member: You are a pessimist.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I do not think the Esperance railway will ever be built.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The Premier knows that it is being built and that it will be constructed very soon.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I think it is being built something like the pyramids.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are building it with a wheelbarrow!

Hon. J. CORNELL: In view of the position to which I have drawn attention, what sphere will there be open for the public works committee to inquire into concerning the railway position for the next few years to come, seeing that the railways already authorised cannot be built within the next seven years? Since wheat farming commenced to be undertaken to any extent at all in Western Australia, there has been a policy laid down that 12 miles is the maximum over which any man should be asked to cart his commodities to the railways.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That has been departed from.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I think 10 miles is far enough. But, in any case, the assurance I have referred to was given to settlers, to induce them to go out and open up the back country. In those circumstances, what field of inquiry is there for a public works committee in the consideration of that question? That undertaking has to be honoured, seeing that the settlers received that promise when they took up the land.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hundreds of settlers are more than 12 miles away from the railways to-day.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I know of cases where people are 18 and 20 miles away from the railways. I am convinced that there are a number of railways in addition to those already authorised, that should be constructed without any inquiry at all, in order that these settlers should be relieved of their present disabilities.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We may not have any kinks in the railways under this proposal.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The advisory committee reported on the route to be taken by the railways and if that could happen under the railway advisory board's regime, I think it could happen too under the operations of a public works committee. It has been stated that the advisory board reported on the routes to be followed, but that the Minister in control came into the question as well. The same thing could happen with the public

works committee. There is nothing to stop such a course. There is one part of the Bill, however, which I believe is absolutely new, when this measure is compared with those which have preceded it. I refer to that part which permits the pulling up of existing railways. I cannot find any such reference in the 1912 Bill. It is definitely laid down, however, that one of the functions of the public works committee is to report upon the necessity for pulling up certain railways.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: They will start on the goldfields.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The position to-day is that before a railway can be pulled up, an Act of Parliament which authorised its construction has to be annulled by Parliament itself. If the members of such a public works committee went along to inquire about the pulling up of railways in some parts of the State, I would not like to be those members when they reach some places to which they would have to go. There is to be a recommendation to Parliament, and Parliament—not the public works committee—has to decide whether the railway should be pulled up. I have already stated that the principle of similar Bills passed in New South Wales and other States as well as the Commonwealth, was the inquiry into the construction of new works and not the conducting of investigations in connection with existing works. The Commonwealth Government have appointed another committee which is the natural corollary of a public works committee. They appointed a public accounts committee with the result that the public works committee will go into the question of costs, etc., in connection with a new work and make a recommendation. Later on it is within the province of the public accounts committee to go into the question relating to the financial justification or otherwise of the work recommended by the public works committee. The Commonwealth Government are somewhat logical to that extent. If we pass this Bill, we will probably get a public accounts Bill. I understand there are three different standing committees in the Federal Parliament, and we know what happened when they were appointed. The Bill before us goes a little beyond the method of appointment adopted by the Federal Parliament. If we look up the personnel of the Public Works Committee, the Public Accounts Committee, and the other committee of the Federal Parliament, we find that they are an absolute reflex of the parties as they are constituted in that Parliament. I do not know of a ballot having taken place in connection with the appointment of any of those committees. The method adopted by the Government has been to preserve the representation of the parties. There is a very important feature in connection with the Bill now before us which we must take into consideration. When a similar Bill was previously rejected it was a direct departure from Cabinet and parliamentary government as we know it. To-day the position is that

the responsibility rests on Ministers of the Crown. Those Ministers are guided by the heads and sub-heads of departments and technical advisers, and the measures that are submitted to Parliament come with the approval of Cabinet. One of the reasons advanced by the Leader of the House for the passing of this Bill is that our public utilities have drifted into such a position that they have become losing propositions. But the Bill asks us to depart from a principle which has been in operation in this country since the institution of responsible Government, and not one scintilla of evidence has been advanced against the incompetence of departmental heads whose duty it is to advise the Government. Had Ministers made out a case in this direction, there might have been some justification for the appointment of another body. I have carefully listened to hon. members' remarks but I have failed to hear anything in the shape of a charge against the responsible advisers. Another reason advanced for the passing of the Bill is that Ministers to-day have too much work to do. I admit that Ministers have a considerable amount of work to do, but since my return to Parliament, and until quite recently, there were always nine members of Parliament in the Cabinet. Almost immediately after the advent of the present Government the number was reduced to six, which was tantamount to saying that six were capable of doing the work. Now, therefore, why are we asked to appoint a committee, which is going to be a direct charge upon the Crown, to do the work of Ministers after those Ministers have declared that they were capable of conducting Ministerial duties with three fewer than before? The result of the reduction in the number of members of Cabinet will have the effect of enabling Ministers to draw more salary than they were getting before.

Hon. J. Duffell: And they earn it, too.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am not disputing that.

The Minister for Education: They are not doing anything of the kind.

Hon. J. CORNELL: They are. If we followed it up we would find that Ministers were actually receiving more money now by virtue of the fact that they had six instead of eight Ministers amongst whom to divide their salaries. Now the position is that the Ministry have come to the conclusion that they want a public works committee to assist them. I would prefer to go back to the old system of more Ministers, and I venture to say that then we would know better where we were. Mr. Greig has said that he intends to support the second reading on condition that he can bring about the election of the committee by secret ballot. I think Mr. Greig is treading on dangerous ground. If the Bill passes the second reading, it will probably go through all its stages as it is. Subclause 1 of Clause 2 provides that the committee shall be elected in the same way as select committees are elected. If the Leader of the House moves that so and so be

members of the committee, one hon. member can object and ask that some other name be substituted. In such a case, according to the Standing Orders, members would have to vote. Mr. Greig also declared that he would support the Bill if he could secure an amendment to limit the period of the existence of the committee to 12 months or two years. The principle of the Bill is that the life of the committee shall be in accordance with the life of the Parliament and it is proposed that the Bill shall automatically lapse with each Legislative Assembly election. The Bill is being put in the same category as a war measure, that is to say, that it shall remain in force until such and such a date and no longer. That would mean the frequent re-enactment of the measure. I am against temporary legislation, or at any rate that kind of legislation which is enforced only from year to year. There are only a few more points I wish to make. In 1912 the Minister and I both recorded votes in connection with a similar measure. The Minister voted for the rejection of the Bill and I voted for the Bill to be passed. Nine years have gone by and—I do not wish to be personal—if we followed the Minister's actions since his advent to this House, we would find that until he became a member of Cabinet he had but one object in view, one set task in life, and that was to oust the then Government. He succeeded in doing that in company with others, but I believe he was the strongest factor in that regard by reason of his old acquaintance with the Press and the space that was given to his utterances. At any rate, he succeeded in assisting to bring about the defeat of the Scaddan Government. He had one cry, one slogan only, and it was that the then Government knew nothing whatever of finance, that they were nothing less than squanderers, and that if they were permitted to continue on the course they were following they would land the country in bankruptcy. That happened in 1916. For five years the present Minister for Education has led this House, and led it well. He led it for the original Government and for their lineal descendants. With what result so far as the finances are concerned? With the result that the 1¼ million deficit left by the Scaddan Government has been converted into a deficit of 5¼ millions. That has been the result of the defeat of the frenzied finance party. For five years the drift has gone on. The railways are in a state approaching bankruptcy.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: There is a brighter day dawning.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I admit that. For five years the present Minister for Education could not see the wisdom of appointing a public works committee and a happy solution was not seen by him until the present measure made its appearance, or until reaching the present position, which perhaps is too unsavoury to discuss. Now the hon. gentleman asks this House to agree to the passage

of a public works committee Bill, which will probably right the position brought about by the policy of frenzied finance. If that is going to be the result of the appointment of this committee, we shall go from bad to worse. For five years the Leader of the House has seen the drift which has been going on and he has not brought anything down in the shape of legislation to stem its progress until we get this panacea for all ills, the Bill we have before us. I intend to reverse my vote on this occasion for the reason that those who are responsible for the position in which we find ourselves should be made to shoulder the burden, and if they cannot right the position, or display some semblance of doing so, they should be superseded by another Government just as they displaced the Scaddan Government. I shall not be a party to any forlorn hope to delegate the authority and responsibility which rightly belong to the Government to such a committee. Therefore, I shall vote against the second reading.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [6.1]: In the few remarks I intend to make on this measure, I propose to look at it from two directions. The first is as it regards the railways and tramways. I have little hesitation in saying that it will be provocative of evil insofar as these utilities are brought under a standing committee. To have what would undoubtedly be a political body meddling with and peddling in these public utilities would, I believe, result in harm. Insofar as the public works committee would deal with future constructions of public works, I admit that there may be something to be said in favour of the constitution of such a body, but as has been pointed out, there is little probability of us embarking upon such works on any large scale. I am not altogether satisfied that even with regard to future public works, the committee would not be an unmixed evil. So far as it would give rise to a closer consideration and investigation of the cost and utility of the proposed works, it would make for good; but against that must be set the fact that it would undoubtedly tend to lessen Ministerial and Cabinet responsibility for the introduction of such works. I would like to ask: Is it likely that this standing committee would be less amenable to political influence than is the present Cabinet? Is it likely that the men composing it will be abler men? I take it that in all Governments the ablest men are selected for office. That is the general rule.

Hon. A. H. Panton interjected.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: Perhaps it applies to the Liberal or National Party more than to the hon. member's party, where I believe they are elected by caucus. Whether the decision is made by Cabinet or by the standing committee, they are both liable to political influence, and the committee would undoubtedly be subject to the same pressure from their constituents or from other members of Parliament as would be the Cabinet. I am

of opinion that to lessen Ministerial responsibility would undoubtedly be harmful. The only excuse for this measure is if it should be considered that Ministers do not give sufficient attention to the matters they recommend to Parliament, and do not supply Parliament with sufficient data on which to form an opinion. The only excuse there can be for a Cabinet doing that is the plea that they are overloaded with work. Although some members seem to think that the present Ministers are overloaded with work, I certainly am not of that opinion. A great deal of the time of Ministers is taken up by social and semi-social-political functions, and I would suggest that they economise their time in this direction. I am not sure that it would not pay them if they re-organised their portfolios and devoted one Minister entirely to the social side and called him the Minister for Junketings. I have in mind one Minister who I feel sure would grace the position, and I think he himself would perhaps welcome the appointment.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Which Minister?

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: I have not mentioned any name. This seems to be the reason why Cabinet does not give sufficient attention to public works before recommending them to Parliament. I am quite open to conviction. I can see certain good points in the proposal, but I can also see certain harmful ones, and I feel certain that the constitution of such a committee would materially increase the cost of the administration of the State.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [6.6]. I can hardly understand members in favour of this Bill remaining silent. So far as I can see every member who has spoken, except one, has opposed the measure.

Hon. A. H. Panton: How do you know there are any in favour of it?

Hon. J. EWING: So far I think only one has spoken in favour of it. I do not know whether that can be taken as a criterion of the support which the Bill is likely to receive, but I was rather astonished, when the Minister indicated his readiness to reply and close the second reading debate, that no member rose to support the Bill. I am opposed to the measure. I regret that I have to oppose it, but I do so in the best interests of the country. The Minister, in moving the second reading, referred to the Bill having received the unanimous approval of members of another place. That is not the position. In looking up the records, I find the majority in favour of the Bill was so great that it was apparently not worth taking a division on the second reading, but this does not mean that every member of another place favoured the Bill. The purpose of the Bill is set out in Clause 12, which provides for the appointment of a public works committee to inquire into the railways, tramways, and electrical systems and all public works. Although I agree with the Government that

there is scope for inquiring into the railways, tramways, and electrical systems, the inquiry should be conducted by experts. The railways during the last quarter showed a deficit of something like £168,000, and the tramways a deficit of 3,500. The electrical works showed a profit of £1,110, but this was largely due to the enormous charge made for current supplied to the tramways. While the power house charges for current resulted in the tramways making a loss, the power house made a small profit. It would be in the interests of the country if an inquiry were made into the railway system. I do not agree with those who maintain that the Commissioner of Railways should not be interfered with. The Commissioner was appointed under statute for a certain number of years, but he cannot dictate the policy of the country. He must be amenable to the Government and to Parliament. If the Government think that the administration of the railways is wrong, it is their bounden duty to appoint someone to inquire into the policy and the advisableness of making alterations and reprimanding those officials who may not be carrying out their duties as well as they might. The policy of the railways, in my opinion, is absolutely against the best interests of the State. The only policy the railways seem to have, as I have previously pointed out in this House, is to raise the freights and fares. Although wages have risen considerably and the cost of materials has increased, in which matters the Commissioner has our sympathy, still the only thing he can do is to raise freight and fares.

Hon. T. Moore: And thus decrease the traffic.

Hon. J. EWING: I was leading up to that point. The returns for last quarter show that the traffic has decreased considerably. I know a man who lived at Claremont. He has a family of four or five, who had to pay such excessive rates for travelling to the city that he found it impossible to continue to live at Claremont, and he has come up to Perth to increase the multitude in the city. The policy of the Commissioner makes for centralisation pure and simple. This is one concrete case, but in all the different centres we find that owing to the enormous increase in fares, people are moving into the city in order to save expense. I do not know that I am quite in order in referring to these matters, but I wish to show the necessity for creating some body to inquire into them—some body apart from the one suggested by this Bill.

The Minister for Education: Why not this body?

Hon. J. EWING: I will tell the Minister, and perhaps my suggestion may be found preferable to that of the Government. People who live at Midland Junction and other such centres are moving into Perth in order to obviate the expense of increased fares. Can anyone tell me that it is a right policy of railway administration which encourages the further congestion of the city? If members look at the report, they will find that the Com-

missioner states he has increased the tramway fares considerably, but he finds he has not increased them sufficiently. The additional burden which he has imposed has been placed upon the workers who have to travel into the city early in the morning.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is never imposed on anyone else.

Hon. J. EWING: Yet the tramways have lost £3,500, which is equal to £14,000 a year. Members must agree that an inquiry should be held into the serious position obtaining in connection with railways, tramways and electrical supply.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The tramways are laying all these new roads out of revenue.

Hon. J. EWING: Then an inquiry might clear the matter up. The fact that the report shows such a heavy loss is justification for an inquiry. The Minister asked by interjection what other body I would propose. Without any reflection on any member of this House or of another place, I say advisedly that it is impossible to get a committee of members of Parliament possessing the necessary technical knowledge to inquire into these utilities. Among members of Parliament are one or two engineers, but they could not inquire into these technical questions. What do they know about electricity? Could not the manager of the power house bamboozle them from beginning to end? They would not be able to ascertain where the loss occurred. He could cover it up right through. The same applies to the railways and tramways. My advice to the Government is to appoint a Royal Commission—notwithstanding that one has been refused recently in this Chamber, this is the only way of overcoming the difficulty—consisting of two expert men and one Government man. The latter may be a member of Parliament; I do not mind so long as he is a good business man, but let the other two be experts.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. EWING: Before tea I was pointing out that in my opinion Clause 12 was the most important clause of the Bill, and I endeavoured to show that the Government would get far better results from the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire, as I believe inquiry is necessary, into the policy and administration of the Railway Department. As regards the Bill, the mode of election seems to me satisfactory, and perfectly fair. I have no doubt that both Houses of Parliament would exercise discretion in the appointments to the proposed committee. I feel quite sure that the members selected would be the best available for the purpose. Neither do I take any exception to the fees to be paid to the members of the committee. Indeed, I think the fees are too low. I cannot well understand how any hon. member who has any private business at all to attend to, or any other means of livelihood, could afford to serve on the committee for the small re-

muneration offered by the Government under this Bill. It has been said that members of Parliament, on account of the increase of their salaries, should be able to give their time, and even work of this nature, to the public without any additional remuneration whatever. But it is absolutely unfair to ask hon. members appointed to the committee to place themselves in such a position. I should be inclined to fix the fees very much higher. The Minister for Education said that this was one of the most important Bills of the session. Of course he said that, because the measure is so closely allied to finance. He contended that if such a measure had been in force 10 years ago, a large amount of money would have been saved to Western Australia; and in this assertion he was supported by other members. The view I take of the matter is this: In 1911, when a measure of this kind was first introduced by the Scaddan Government, they had been returned from the country with a certain policy. That policy was to start, among other things, State trading concerns. Now, if at that time a committee of this kind had been established to investigate the value or otherwise of the State trading concerns which the Scaddan Government were proposing to start, and if the committee had reported against what was then the policy of the Scaddan Government, Ministers, having returned with huge majority, as was the case in 1911, would have simply pushed on one side the decision of the public works committee and would have carried out their policy irrespective of it. It is no part of the duty of any committee to dictate to a Cabinet what its policy should be. We would certainly have had the Wyndham Meat Works, the State Implement Works, the State Sawmills, and the State Brickworks established in 1911 even if the proposed committee had then been in existence. Even to-day, if such a committee recommended to the Government something in opposition to a recent decision of the electors, Ministers would still carry out their policy irrespective of what the committee might recommend. The committee being formed, their most important function would be to inquire into the railways and tramways and other public utilities, and incidentally to inquire into new public works proposed. That being the case, it has been stated by hon. members here to-day that no large new works are going to be constructed. Two or three hon. members have said that it is not possible for large works to be undertaken by the Government. To that view I am entirely opposed, because I consider that within the next 10 years very large and important works will be taken in hand by the Government of Western Australia, whatever Government may be in power, if Western Australia is going to advance. If the State is to retrogress, we shall have no public works. I have often expressed, and I now repeat, the opinion that the only salvation for this country is in large operations, in carrying out large works; and it certainly will be just as necessary to have

a public works committee during the next 10 years, if we are to have one at all, as in the opinion of the Minister it was necessary to have the committee during the past 10 years. If a very important matter comes before the Government and they feel they are not competent, on the advice given them by their engineers, to arrive at a decision as to the best means of carrying out the proposed work, then they could appoint either a Royal Commission or a committee to report upon that one particular undertaking, and then they would be able to deduce what was best in the interests of the country to be done.

Hon. J. Duffell: A Royal Commission would not be of the same advantage to this Chamber as the proposed committee, on which this Chamber would have two members.

Hon. J. EWING: I shall show presently that we have expert officers to advise the Government wherever technical knowledge is required. If we had a Commission specially to inquire into the Railway Department or the electrical works, we would need to have some expert on the technical side of it. I do not know that there is such a member in either House. The defeat of a similar measure in 1911 was said to be due to the fact that the public utilities were paying interest on the public debt. Such is not the position to-day at all. The loss on the public utilities is now approximately £613,000, and our interest bill has increased by £1,900,000 annually. If we had a public works committee to inquire into the reason why the public utilities are going to the bad at such an enormous rate, they could only report what is already known to us. It must be within the knowledge of the Government, as it is within the knowledge of every member of this Chamber, that these losses proceed from the public utilities. There is an annual loss of practically £600,000 from the railways, tramways and electrical works. According to the figures available, the loss for this quarter in that connection is £168,000, at which rate the loss for the year will be considerably greater than £600,000. Then there is the loss on the State trading concerns, amounting to £250,000, or £300,000, or perhaps £400,000. Adding these two amounts together, we have practically a million of money, representing almost that difference of £1,300,000, which the Minister stated the committee would inquire into. Again, we have the soldier settlement scheme in progress, with an enormous amount of money borrowed from the Federal Government, on which we have to pay interest. From that expenditure there is no result as yet, nor can there be for some considerable time. So that the source of the deficiency of £1,300,000 per annum that the Minister speaks about is well known. Then, why inquire into the matter? What necessity is there to inquire where the money has gone? We have to pay an enormous amount of interest on money expended in public works which are not returning interest and sinking fund. It does not matter if we have one

hundred committees, the position would be the same. The only thing such a committee could do would be to tell the Government where they can effect economies, thus helping the State out of its difficulties. That seems to me to be the position. Now I wish to refer to one matter which has been erroneously stated to the House. It has been said that any new work of an estimated cost exceeding £20,000 must of necessity be referred to the public works committee. Mr. Stewart said, I think, that no work estimated to cost less than £20,000 could be referred to the committee. However, I think that hon. members, if they read the Bill carefully, will find that though there is nothing to compel the Minister to do so, it is perfectly open to him, whether Parliament is in session or out of session, to refer to the committee any public utility or proposed public work, even if the work is only going to cost £10,000 or £2,000, or £1,000. The Minister can remove the responsibility from his own shoulders by referring any work to the public works committee. I wish to know whether I am right in that view or not. I can find in the Bill nothing that prevents the Minister from referring even a matter of £1,000 to the public works committee. That position will allow Ministers to evade responsibility absolutely. The Minister can say to a deputation, "This is going to cost £2,000, and I will not take the responsibility; I will refer the matter to the public works committee." Thus a matter might be delayed year in and year out, without receiving attention. I think I am right in stating that that is the position.

The Minister for Education: Where do you get that in the Bill?

Hon. J. EWING: The Bill says that any proposed public work of an estimated cost exceeding £20,000 shall necessarily be referred to the public works committee. The Bill does not say that any proposed public work estimated to cost less than £20,000 shall not be referred to the committee but that the Government shall take the responsibility for it. We are supposed to have in this State an efficient staff of engineers. I am not going to say that all those engineers are good, are bad, or are indifferent; I am not going to cast any reflection whatever upon them. But I do say that the responsible Minister administering the department, if he is not getting good advice and reliable advice from his engineers, must get rid of them, and the sooner the better. I am aware that it is an easy matter for me to stand up here and make a statement of that kind. It is always easy to blow a bugle for other people to go to battle. It is very easy to criticise and pull down, but it is not so easy to plan and construct. We have in this State what are supposed to be expert engineers, men who have given their lives to different phases of engineering. They should be in a position to advise the Government properly and well. If not, they should be dismissed. A Minister of the Crown desiring to carry out a certain work would say to his Engineer-in-Chief, "I

want such and such information." The Engineer-in-Chief supplies it. If it comes to the Minister's knowledge then that the information is not correct, or not the very best that could be given, it becomes his duty to take the necessary action.

Hon. A. Lovekin: You cannot do that.

Hon. J. EWING: There must be some means of dealing with inefficient men. I myself contend that we have an efficient public service. I think we have in our public service some very good and efficient engineers; and we want to make the greatest possible use of them. If in a matter of great public importance a Minister remains in doubt after getting the advice of his engineers, he can have further expert inquiry made into the matter. I look upon this Bill as amounting really to a reflection on the Government engineers of this State. In effect it says to them, "Your information and your figures and your advice are not really what the Government require; Ministers cannot depend upon them, and therefore we will appoint a public works committee to take evidence and find out whether you are right or wrong." I do not think that under a system of that kind Western Australia would have an efficient and satisfied public service. I am inclined to think they would resent it very much indeed.

The Minister for Education: Do they resent it in other places?

Hon. J. EWING: Perhaps not. If the Bill were passed, it would be a reflection on the public service. If we cannot accept the advice given by the departmental officers, the sooner we get rid of them the better. Mr. Greig the other night said that one officer would back up another even if he considered that a mistake were being made. If such a state of affairs exists, it is very bad indeed for the country. The responsibility rests with the chief. If the chief finds that one of his subordinates has made a mistake or given a wrong estimate, it is his duty to see that the officer is reprimanded or suspended, as the occasion may demand. As I say, Clause 13 appears to me to mean that the Government can shirk all their responsibility on every undertaking, however small.

The Minister for Education: I do not know where you read that into it.

Hon. J. EWING: I can find in the Bill nothing to the contrary.

The Minister for Education: Where is the authority to refer to the committee a work estimated to cost less than £20,000?

Hon. J. EWING: I think the authority is contained in the Bill. I may be wrong. Works estimated to cost over £20,000 must be submitted to the proposed committee, and there is nothing whatever to prevent Ministers submitting to the committee works estimated to cost less than £20,000. The Premier, I understand, has some large and important works in his mind. There is, for instance, an amount of £50,000 to be expended on the Peel estate.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Several gangs of men are at work there now.

Hon. J. EWING: If the expenditure of £50,000 on the Peel estate were to be submitted to a public works committee, and if that committee reported against the policy of the Premier in respect of land settlement, the Premier would take no notice of it. He is a strong enough man to carry on, no matter how sharply such a committee reported against his policy. The policy of the Government cannot be interfered with by the proposed committee. Also, as I have said, I do not think such a committee would be composed of men who would be able to give very valuable advice to the State. Mr. Kirwan mentioned the enormous expenditure by the Federal public works committee, and said that in respect of one work, which cannot be carried out for the next 20 or 30 years, that committee has expended £6,000. I understand that is the Oodnadatta-Pine Creek Railway.

The Minister for Education: Not for 30 years!

Hon. J. EWING: At all events, not for a considerable number of years. The public works committee have been travelling through that country in motor cars to secure information in regard to the proposal. Why could not they have employed engineers to inquire into that work? Why send the public works committee there? We cannot find out what that Federal public works committee is expending. An hon. member said the other night it was equal to anything up to £30,000 per annum. I should not be surprised if it amounted to £50,000 or even £100,000. Federal parliamentary papers show one item in one place and another in another, and there is no possible check on the expenditure. The responsibility of Ministers is placed on the shoulders of those who are not really responsible. I am afraid that something of this kind may happen in Western Australia. If I thought the proposed committee could do any good, I would vote for the Bill, but I am convinced that it is going to cost £1,000 in fees, goodness knows how much in the establishment of the department which will inevitably be built up around it, and nobody knows the total cost of travelling about, making the necessary inquiries. It will be easy for the expenses of this proposed committee to reach an alarming figure which we would not be justified in sanctioning. Although members of the committee cannot draw more than a certain sum per annum, yet the expenses might be increasingly great until the committee will be costing more than the State can afford. However, the real reason of my opposition to the Bill is that I do not think the committee will be of material advantage to the Government. If only Ministers would get rid of the State trading concerns and put their house in order, they would not have the enormous amount of work to do which is thrown upon them to-day. I feel justified in voting against the second reading.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [7.52]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [7.53]: Like Mr. Sanderson, I have been greatly surprised and, I may say, seriously pained at the extreme bitterness imported into this debate by certain members. I can see no reason for it. I cannot understand why a Bill of this kind could not be discussed and determined upon its merits, without the imputation of improper motives to anybody. Curiously enough, the first offender in this direction was a member who can very rarely be said to trespass on those grounds. I refer to Sir Edward Wittenoom, who reflected, not so much on Ministers, as upon Parliament and members of Parliament. He expressed regret that the rules of the House did not permit him to use such words as "bribery and corruption" which, he said, were what the Bill really meant. He stated directly that the receipt by certain members of the House of an addition of something up to £200 per annum, and in the case of other members the prospect that at some time or other they too might have a chance of receiving that £200, would corrupt those members and make them servile supporters of the Government of the day.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I said influence, not corrupt them.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The distinction is rather a subtle one. During the whole of the period I have been in the House, nearly 10 years, I have never heard so improper and unjustifiable a reflection on the honour of members of Parliament as was contained in the speech by Sir Edward Wittenoom. I can only think the hon. member did not understand the provisions of the Bill. Had he understood them he would never have made statements of that kind by way of argument; because the members of this committee will not be elected by the Government, and consequently there could be no inducement to anybody who thought he would like to be a member of the committee to support the Government or seek to curry favour with the Government. Members of the committee will be elected by the two Houses; neither in another place nor in this Chamber will they be elected by the Government. In the Assembly it is the recognised practice that select committees are chosen on a practically proportional basis, in order that the different sections in the House should be represented on the committee. In this Chamber our Standing Orders provide that the mover of a select committee may nominate his committee, and on any member expressing a wish in that direction, the committee shall be elected by secret ballot. So the Government would have nothing whatever to do with the appointment of the proposed committee. Then the hon. member said that

the life of the committee would depend on the life of the Government, and that therefore it would be an inducement to the members of the committee to vote to keep the Government in office. But the Bill provides just the opposite. It provides that the committee shall be elected for the life of Parliament. Therefore, the members of the committee would not be in any way dependent on the Government of the day. The Government might go out and another come in, but the committee would still continue a committee of Parliament, responsible to Parliament, and in every way removed from any influence by the Government. Mr. Holmes made a similar attack upon members of Parliament; but whilst he did, perhaps not so directly as Sir Edward Wittenoom, reflect on their integrity, his attack was mainly on their intelligence. He used the phrase "any old thing." I do not know which section of the House or of another place he referred to by that phrase. The Bill provides that the members of the committee shall be those selected by the Houses of Parliament in accordance with the idea of those Houses as to their particular fitness for the position. And the hon. member refers to them as "any old thing." I can only assume that the hon. member, in his—I use the words not offensively, but I think they are justified—somewhat over-bearing vanity, and knowing that he himself, for some reason or other, would not be disposed to take a seat on this committee, comes to the conclusion that whoever is elected must be incompetent.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think you misjudge him.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: He certainly attacked the proposal as one that would put "any old thing" on the committee.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: No, I said "Any old thing in the way of a committee."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Bill provides that the committee shall be composed of men who, in the opinion of this House and of another place, are best qualified for the positions. I cannot understand why a proposal of this kind could not be discussed on its merits without any member saying things insulting to his fellow members. Another thing which struck me during the debate was the readiness with which some members shift their ground of argument. Frequently Bills are submitted in which it is proposed that certain powers shall be left to administrative officers, usually highly placed administrative officers. Members say to us on every occasion, "Oh, no, it must be put exactly so in the Bill. These officers cannot be depended upon. We know it is unsafe to trust them." When a proposal of this kind comes along we are told that all the Minister has to do is to seek the advice of his responsible officers and if he cannot, on that advice, make up his mind as to what must be done, he is not fit for the responsible position of Minister. On one day the responsible officer is someone not to be

trusted; he has to be bound down in every way. On another day, because it suits the different argument that is put forward, the responsible officer is a man who may be blindly followed and whose decision no one need have any fear about. I am not going to attempt to reconcile opinions so conflicting as these. They both fall short of the real circumstances. Generally speaking, the officers of the State, particularly the more responsible officers are earnest, careful and competent men, but it is certainly not correct to assume that a committee of this kind could not get information that is beyond the power of a Minister to obtain. A Minister is to a large extent bound down to the official reports. He cannot go behind them. This committee, however, would have power to go behind them. They would have powers, and very large powers, to seek information from whatever source they thought they could obtain it.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Cannot a Minister do that now?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Can a Minister go behind the back of his responsible officer to get information outside? He cannot get it in the way the committee would do, for they would get it in a straightforward manner by means of evidence. I do not see how a Minister, after receiving advice from his responsible officer, could go behind his back.

Hon. A. Lovekin: He is only a rubber stamp if he does not.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member is disputing the attitude taken up by other opponents of the Bill. Other opponents have said the Minister can get advice from his responsible officers and can be guided by it. Mr. Lovekin now suggests that a Minister is only a rubber stamp and ought to go outside and make investigations on his own account.

Hon. A. Lovekin: He ought to take the responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is said that this Bill means the shifting of the responsibility from the shoulders of Ministers. Some members have made the absurd statement that the committee would replace the Government, and that in the event of the committee being appointed there would be no need for any Government. Hon. members must have forgotten that a similar committee has been in existence in the Commonwealth Parliament for many years. It is not suggested that the committee has replaced the Commonwealth Government, or relieved them of any of their responsibilities. Similar committees have been in existence in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia for a good many years. It is not suggested that they have done away with the necessity for Ministers. The work of this committee will be entirely one of inquiry into those matters which are specifically referred to it by Parliament, or in certain circumstances by Ministers when Parliament is not in session. I wish to refer

to an argument with which Mr. Ewing dealt at some length. He said that a Minister not wishing to carry out a public work at a trifling cost would refer it to the committee. I have looked through the Bill again since the hon. member made those remarks, because I know he is usually so careful in what he says, but I can find no authority for reference of any work of the kind to the committee.

Hon. J. Ewing: It does not say this shall not be done.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Bill gives power to do certain things and limits the powers that are given. Matters cannot be referred to the committee which are not included within those powers. Clause 12 sets out the things that may be referred to the committee, and Clause 13 refers to matters enumerated in Clause 12. Nothing outside this can, in the way I read the Bill, be referred to the committee. Mr. Stewart made one reference I should like to clear up, namely, as to the absence of a schedule from the Bill, although references to the schedule are made in it. The schedules were duly drafted and included in the print of the Bill, and how they were dropped out before reaching the Legislative Assembly I do not understand. They were purely formal schedules, and consequently their omission escaped the notice of members of another place. The schedules are in existence. It was due to an error on someone's part that they were not included.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Would it be a case of dropping their bundle.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They were comparatively unimportant. The suggestions made by Mr. Greig, I for one would be prepared to consider. His first suggestion that the election for members of the committee should be by secret ballot, is unnecessary, for our Standing Orders already provide for that. He suggested that the operations of the Bill should be limited to 12 months. That does not appeal to me. In the light of experience elsewhere it seems to me that we should adopt it as a permanent measure. If the House tells us we should try it for 12 months with a view to making it permanent, or drop it then, as experience may dictate, I do not know that the Government would have a serious objection to that course. Mr. Baxter's only objection to the Bill was that it meant the establishment of another large department. I do not know why he said that, or what there is to warrant such an assumption. Large departments have not been established in connection with public works committees in other places. There will be some expenditure, such expenditure as is necessary to enable the committee to carry on. I see no warrant for supposing that such expenditure will be much in comparison with the large amount of money which, properly constituted, an active committee of this sort ought to save every year of its existence. With the exception of Mr. Ewing and one or two others,

members in their opposition to the Bill have shown a very bitter and unreasoning hostility towards the Government. They have said they would be opposed to the Bill because they thought it would assist the Government. Have they not recognised that the Government have many difficulties to contend with? Would they seriously oppose the Bill because they thought it would help the Government? Our chief difficulty is finance. The more closely the financial position is investigated, the more clear does it become that the trouble lies with our public utilities. I quoted figures when moving the second reading of the Bill to show that in 1911 our public utilities not alone paid their working expenses, interest, and sinking fund, but they also paid their interest bill on their entire indebtedness to the State. To-day they fall short of paying their own interest and sinking fund—that is interest and sinking fund on the money actually invested in them—by £714,000 per annum. That was more than the total deficit for last year. If these public utilities could be brought to a payable position the financial difficulties of the Government would practically disappear. The contention of the Government is that the formation of a committee of this kind would be the best means of placing before Parliament the fullest possible information regarding contemplated works, and by this means avoid the passing of new works which are likely to increase the present burden, and also that it would afford the best means we can devise for investigating the affairs of existing public utilities, with a view to seeing how the position could be remedied. Mr. Ewing said, "We know where the loss is. What is the good of this committee?" I confess we do not know how to avoid it.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is it not a matter for a financial advisory committee?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is a matter for general inquiry and investigation upon all phases of the position. Last week—I quote this for the purpose of illustration—we were discussing the Grain Bill. Mr. Holmes said he would be inclined to support the Bill if he could get information on this point or that point, and had an assurance on this or something else. If I set out to furnish the hon. member with such assurances, from what source am I to get the information?

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is all available.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the hon. member thinks so, well and good, but I do not think, in regard to that proposal any more than I do to other public works proposals put before the Government, that all the information is always available. There is often a lot of investigation necessary before the full facts can be revealed. Mr. Holmes also made reference to works in the North-West. He wanted to know whether the Commissioner for the North-West was to be superseded by the passing of this Bill. I should like to mention one important and urgent work in the North-West, and tell the

hon. member my experience in regard to it. I refer to the construction of a jetty to serve the requirements of the immensely important district of Onslow, one of the best districts we have in the State, a district so ill-equipped that there are no facilities for the people to transport their stock by sea. The need for a jetty was recognised a dozen years ago; so far back as 1908 it was regarded as a burning and urgent question. The hon. member is probably aware that on last year's Estimates a sum of £50,000 was provided for the construction of a jetty at Beedon Point to serve the requirements of the district of Onslow, and that of this sum £10,000 was to be made available for immediate expenditure. In 1908 a proposal was put before the Government that, instead of continuing the present jetty so as to obtain 22 feet of water at low tide, a new jetty should be built at Parker's Reef, and an estimate of the work was given at £40,000. That, I may say, must be regarded as a rough estimate, and as something justifying investigation. The engineer in chief said he did not think the expenditure of £40,000 on the proposed jetty at Parker's Reef would be justified, because a like expenditure would have been sufficient to carry the present Onslow jetty out into a depth of 22 feet of water, which was all that was desired. In 1910 it was decided that these two projects should be investigated, and an engineer spent some time in looking into the matter. He reported that the extension of the existing jetty to a length of 6,800 feet would bring it into 22 feet of water and would cost £72,000, which was something like double the amount suggested by the engineer in chief. He also said that a jetty at Parker's Reef might be constructed—he put up three different proposals—running into a cost of from £60,000 to 65,000. The upshot was that the entire project was turned down, because it appeared that it would cost much more than the original estimate. A couple of years later another engineer investigated the position, and suggested that the Beedon Point jetty could be erected at a cost of £25,000 to £30,000. The matter was revived a year or two ago and a report was submitted to the Government, that in 1913 it was estimated that the Beedon Point jetty would cost £25,000 to £30,000, but the probabilities were that now it would cost a great deal more. It was on the strength of that report and further reports that the Government placed on the Estimates last year £50,000 for the Beedon Point jetty and promised that it should be constructed. This jetty is 2,300 feet in length, about one-third of the length of the extension of the existing jetty, which would be necessary to take it out into 22 feet of water. About a fortnight ago we received detailed estimates and the report of the Engineer-in-Chief was to the effect that to construct satisfactorily a jetty at Beedon Point and to provide the necessary appurtenances would cost £200,000. I merely quote this instance to give hon. members some idea of the difficulties the Government have had

to face in trying to fulfil their promises to people in different parts of the State.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: How would the permanent committee do any better?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The committee would have an opportunity of investigating these matters, taking evidence on oath, and inquiring extensively into the different proposals.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What have you done to the officers who put up these different phantoms?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Government should deal with them.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think it is necessary to go any further into the details regarding the position of our railways. Mr. Ewing made reference to the electric power house and made statements—I do not know upon what authority—that the electric power works were doing better because they were overcharging the trams.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The reason that they are doing better is that they are extending the scope of their operations and have sold during the last four months 8,463,000 units as compared with 7,343,000 last year. It is not by reason of any overcharging the trams.

Hon. J. Ewing: In any case, they are overcharging the trams.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Perhaps some people are overcharging the electric lighting works.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is the position.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: So far as the railways are concerned, it is undoubtedly the case that in every State the position is quite as bad, if not worse than in Western Australia. Last year our railways showed an increased loss over the previous year of £19,000. Queensland showed a loss over and above the previous year of £509,000, South Australia of £491,000, New South Wales £447,000, and Victoria £438,000. These are the increased losses, and, as a matter of fact, whereas in 1919-20 our losses had been heavier, by comparison with the other States, than in any other State with the exception of Queensland, in 1920-21 our losses were the lightest of the lot. What Mr. Cornell said is quite true. These railway difficulties are the same throughout the different States of the Commonwealth and throughout every other country as well. Is that any reason why we should not grapple with the position? Is that any reason why we should not try to solve it? As I said on a previous occasion, I think this House made a grave mistake when they rejected the Government proposal to place the railway system under three commissioners. I hope that the House will not repeat that mistake by refusing to adopt the suggestion now advanced by the Government as a means of securing an improved method and in an endeavour to find remedies. The most extraordinary speech delivered during the course of the debate was that of Mr. Kirwan. During the 10 years I have been in

this House, I have very frequently, almost invariably indeed, disagreed with that hon. member, but I have admitted his consistency. Rightly or wrongly, I have attributed that consistency to his freedom from the trammels of the party politician. I am willing to admit that, being human beings, we are often inclined to pre-judge a case according to the party sending forward the proposal. I hope we are fair-minded enough to analyse matters, as well as we can, but undoubtedly we are inclined to favour those proposals which come forward from the side we support, rather than those which come from the party we oppose. Mr. Kirwan, having no party ties, has been free regarding the measures brought forward, and I thought it was because of that he was able to maintain a high level of consistency. Now he comes forward as a strong opponent of the measure similar to one which he heartily supported 10 years before—

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: When the Minister opposed it—

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Let me analyse the reasons that hon. member has advanced for his present attitude. He says the Bill is different and the conditions are different. The Bill is different in that it gives this House a larger say in the matter than was contemplated under other Bills. Is it for that reason that the hon. member opposes it? It is also different, in that it permits the reference to the committee of certain matters that could not be referred to the old proposed committee. The former committee had to confine itself to a consideration of new works. The committee which is proposed under the Bill has to deal with new works and any existing activity that may be specially referred to it. That is a difference, but surely it cannot be regarded as a sufficient difference to convert a warm supporter into a determined antagonist! Then the hon. member says the conditions have changed. I admitted that that was so and pointed out that in 1911 the opponents of a measure of this kind opposed it because everything was going well and they asked: Why alter it? Now everyone must admit, whether they support the Bill or not, that there is some need for action. The hon. member also said that in 1911 there was a lot of work to be done, but now there is nothing to be done! We all know that for many years past, the construction of the Esperance railway has been the first thing in the hon. member's mind. Was it also the last? The construction of the Esperance railway having been decided upon, does that close the book? Is there nothing else to be done to develop this great country? I admit that there are certain financial difficulties which compel the Government to go more slowly than some people would desire, but I join with Mr. Ewing in his statement that, great as the public expenditure has been for the past 10 years, it will be a bad thing for Western Australia if the expenditure during the next 10 years is not to be quite as large, if not larger.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It should be 100 times as great.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Where will you get the money from?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think we shall have any difficulty in getting the money. There has never been any difficulty experienced by any British State in securing the money necessary for its proper development. Mr. Kirwan is an enthusiastic advocate of a vigorous policy of immigration. How does he think we shall be able to attract to this country and settle here immigrants in large numbers, unless we spend money on the construction of public works? Should we let things go on as they are? What is to become of the magnificent possibilities in many portions of this State, which depend upon the expenditure of money?

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Will the Minister mention one or two such public works?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I will help the hon. member all I can. Take the South-Western portion of this State. I am sorry Mr. Kirwan was not able to accompany the parliamentary party which went through that important part of Western Australia recently. I have no hesitation in saying that in the South-Western portion of the State, there is an opportunity of settling a population, double or treble as great as the present population of the whole of Western Australia. Before this opportunity can be availed of, there are difficulties to be overcome; there are problems such as the drainage problem, which up to the present has only been tinkered with. A comprehensive drainage policy for the South-West will have to be adopted and carried out. In view of its size, I think it is a matter that should be closely investigated before it is undertaken, because there can be no doubt—I do not intend to reflect upon any engineer—that a good deal of money has been spent unwisely in the past 10 or 20 years. I will even go back to those days when Mr. Holmes declares we had statesmen in charge of the affairs of the country and I will say that even in those days a great deal of public money was spent unwisely. I do not know whether the hon. member has ever seen the Goongarrie railway station.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Yes, I have.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member will appreciate the fact that that station was built in the days of statesmen. I do not know if the hon. member recognises the large sum of money spent in the erection of public buildings at Coolgarrie in the declining days of the Coolgardie field. I am not reflecting upon any one, but I will go as far back in the history of Western Australia for a good many years. It is not sug- will say that there are instances of unwise expenditure of public money as far back as they like to go. The appointment of the committee contemplated by the Bill will be a check on such expenditure. The responsibility is not with the Government entirely;

it is with Parliament as well. These things will go on until Parliament avails itself of every opportunity of getting the best possible information upon matters submitted to it. In the wheat belt, as Mr. Cornell has already pointed out, there are railways to be constructed. Mr. Cornell says there is no need for an inquiry regarding these railways and he considers that the railways should be constructed straight away. I must admit, however, that there have been mistakes made in the past regarding the construction of railways in the agricultural centres, mistakes which could have been avoided. There is the question of the development of the North-West. In connection with the development of the pastoral industry or of any of the other industries which will be established in that part of the State, in many instances the expenditure of a lot of money will be required and many works will have to be undertaken such as I have already referred to during the course of my remarks. They will require very careful investigation. Then in the metropolitan area we have such questions as tramway extensions, water supply and sewerage. All are necessary. I think that a good deal of money was unwisely spent in connection with the sewerage of Perth. If we had had such a committee in existence, to which Parliament might have referred that question, a committee on which the Government would not have had a dominating influence, I think a lot of money would have been saved.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We would have had a sewerage farm, instead of having the river polluted.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Could not we get a joint select committee appointed from both Houses?

Hon. J. W. Hickey: That would be expensive.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the hon. member thinks he can get a majority to decide on the appointment of such a committee, he may endeavour to do so but he should remember that such a committee would have very restricted powers. Select committees have not the power which it is contemplated that the committee proposed under the Bill will have. The committee we propose is to be a standing committee and, undoubtedly, in the course of a little while the investigation of matters which will receive attention by the members of that committee will result in the increased value of the services rendered by the members of that committee. The members appointed on the joint select committee would not be able to carry out such duties as well as members who have gained experience on a committee such as is contemplated under the Bill.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do you not think that the personnel of the committee will always be changing?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No. The committee will be appointed during the life of Parliament. Unless there are very strong reasons, such as the death of a mem-

ber or of a member forfeiting his right to sit in Parliament, there would be no changes in the committee during the life of a Parliament. When the next Parliament is elected and meets, if those members have given good service, I think they will be re-elected, as has been the experience elsewhere. I have been dealing with the two reasons Mr. Kirwan advanced in opposition to the Bill, namely, that the Bill is different and that the conditions have altered. That hon. member recognised the weakness of his argument, because he proceeded to attack the principle of the public works committee.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: On the further evidence available.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member attacked the New South Wales results. I do not know whether he blamed the New South Wales committee for that position. The hon. member never referred to the existence of similar committees in Victoria and South Australia and that is extraordinary. He attacked the Federal Public Works Committee because of its cost and said that the amount of members' fees was £2,000, that other costs for witnesses and so on accounted for another £2,000, and I think he said there were some expenses for secretaries and officers which brought the total up—apart from the expenses connected with the North-South railway investigation—to £4,000 or £5,000. Does the hon. member consider that that is a large cost for a Commonwealth public works committee covering investigations throughout Australia? I would like the hon. member, if he has not already done so, to again read the speech he delivered in this House in 1911, particularly in this regard. Mr. Moss at that time attacked the proposal on the ground of its expense and he used the expression that the Bill would break the back of £50,000, and he quoted a statement that he had read somewhere that the New South Wales committee was costing up to £30,000. Mr. Kirwan went to the defence of the Bill at once. He said that our committee should not be so expensive as the New South Wales committee, that it would not cost anywhere near £50,000, the sum that Mr. Moss had mentioned. At that time the fees of the proposed committee were considerably higher than those suggested at the present time. In the Bill before members these are limited to £1,100. Under the former Bill they might have reached £2,000. Mr. Kirwan told the House then that £2,000 would be required for printing, £2,000 for witnesses, and that there would be other charges which would bring the total up to £6,000 and then he not only cordially, but very strongly, supported the Bill. Now, he attacks the Bill before the House and declares that it is going to cost us more than we expect, and he attacks the Federal Government for spending for the whole of the Commonwealth less than he previously deemed would be a proper sum to spend in Western Australia for a similar committee. Reference has

been made to the investigation carried out in connection with the North-South railway. One thing I want hon. members to bear in mind in connection with that project is that it is a statutory obligation on the part of the Federal Government. It is one of the conditions under which the Northern Territory was ceded to the Federal Government and it is deliberately and accurately set out in an Act of Parliament, and therefore is an obligation that cannot be refuted. The work is one of great magnitude; it is one in which great issues are involved. The question of route and other things have to be decided, and on whether or not they are wisely decided the future prosperity of that portion of Australia will depend. If there had been no statutory obligation upon the Commonwealth it might readily have been said, let this matter stand over until a more convenient period; but I venture to think that if Western Australia had a similar undertaking from the Commonwealth Government we should certainly expect the Federal Government, as soon as the exigencies of the war had passed, to seriously deal with the matter. The Northern Territory Acceptance Act provides that the Commonwealth, in consideration of the surrender of the Northern Territory, shall construct or cause to be constructed, a railway line from Port Darwin south to a point at the northern boundary of the South Australian province. I venture to think that in similar circumstances Western Australia would have insisted upon the fulfilment of an agreement under which South Australia ceded a large portion of her territory, an agreement embodied in a Federal Act of Parliament and a South Australian Act of Parliament.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It will have to be carried out.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, and I cannot imagine any hon. member taking the view that a work of that magnitude does not need the closest possible investigation. It is all very well to say, "Send your engineers to carry out the investigation." They sent an engineer who, I venture to say is as capable in connection with that sort of work, as any in Australia. But the Commonwealth Government also sent a committee to investigate the position, so that not only the physical characteristics of the country might be considered, but that evidence might be taken from people in the localities affected.

Hon. J. Cornell: Only three out of the seven members of the committee went on that trip.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I daresay that number was quite sufficient. If all had gone the committee might have been charged with extravagance. That three should go with the engineer was entirely a proper proceeding, and I have no doubt that if a committee of five were appointed in Western Australia and it was necessary to make inquiries in remote portions of the State, it would be found advisable that only

two or three of the five should make the trip. It is just the same in connection with Royal Commissions or committees appointed at the present time; it is not unusual to find only a portion of the committee or commission visiting a distant part of the State.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The point is whether £6,000 is not too large a sum.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think £6,000 is a large sum in connection with the investigation of a work which perhaps is going to cost millions. I make a final appeal to Mr. Kirwan before he determines to reverse his decision, and incidentally to destroy that reputation for consistency that he has built up over a long period of years, to read again the speech he delivered in 1911. As an inducement to him to do so, let me quote to him one extract. This is what he said, and I would ask hon. members whether it is not pertinent to the Bill now before the House—

The way I regard this committee is that the Government of the day are giving an opportunity to the Opposition, such as they have not had before, to have a voice, and a very influential voice, in the public works policy of the country. I think the public works policy ought not to be purely a question of party politics.

When the Government does the same thing, when it proposes to give Parliament a general voice in the public works policy of the country, it is accused of shameful evasion of responsibility. One other quotation from the hon. member's speech—

During the four years I have been a member of this House I have had over and over again to vote for railway Bills, and I regret to have to admit that I knew very little indeed about the merits of those particular measures.

There are other cogent arguments in the hon. member's speech. I am sure the hon. member cannot fail to make up his mind that the speech he delivered to 1911 was a much better considered speech than the one to which he treated the House a day or so ago.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And what about your speech then.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I did not speak at all; I had only been a member of the House for a few minutes when that Bill came on. It is worthy of comment that scarcely any hon. member who has spoken against the Bill on this occasion has suggested any alternative. Mr. Ewing did suggest as an alternative Royal Commissions.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have they not suggested getting rid of the trading concerns.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am afraid the hon. member does not realise that whatever may be said against the trading concerns has nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Of course.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The objection I have to the trading concerns is

that they are wrong in principle, because they deprive private enterprise of the stimulant that is necessary to push on and secure the welfare of the country; but from the point of view of contributing to the State deficit, the trading concerns up to now have not been responsible. I have no doubt that in the near future we shall find that the trading concerns will be contributing to the annual deficit, but up to the present they have not done so, and we are considering now those matters that are at the moment contributing towards the deficit of the State. Mr. Ewing suggested that we should have Royal Commissions to investigate these matters. One of the advantages of having a public works committee is that the members who constitute that committee will be members of Parliament and they will be with us to put the case before us.

Hon. J. Duffell: That is very important, too.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Holmes certainly did suggest a course, a course with which he is familiar by experience. When you are up against a difficulty—resign. I really do not know that that would mend the matter to any extent. The various Governments with which I have been associated for the past 5½ years have been confronted with difficulties which I venture to say, with all due respect to the opinion of Sir Edward Wittenoom, are greater than those that confronted any previous administration, and I claim that during the period of the war the Government did all that could be done in the interests of Western Australia, and that since the war we have done everything possible to develop the State and keep unemployment down to a minimum. If there has been a steadily growing deficit, we have on the other hand repaid a corresponding portion of the public debt of the State, and the position is one that the Government has no need to be ashamed of. We have done by no means badly. We have undergone an experience similar to that of other parts of the world, and we are under those additional difficulties which hon. members know of, although some are not generous enough to credit the Government with the fact that Western Australia is to a large extent like a man fighting with one arm tied behind his back. That is the present effect of the Federation compact, and until the difficulty is removed it will never be possible for us to do what we ought to do. Still, we have to face the position as it is, and a most exhaustive analysis of our financial position shows most clearly that the general revenue of the State is sufficient for the general purposes of Government. When we come to the public utilities of the State we have a loss of something over £700,000 per annum. With regard to the public utilities, there are two aspects, their construction and administration. The Government say that for the future there shall be a closer scrutiny than has

been the case in the past. In the future as in the past the responsibility for initiating public works will rest with the Government. Under the Bill all proposals will be submitted to Parliament, and with those proposals all the information at the disposal of the Government, and all the advice that can be obtained from the Government experts, just at present, will also be presented to Parliament, but instead of the House passing judgment, the matter will then be referred to the committee consisting of members of both Houses, so that an exhaustive investigation may be made and a report presented to Parliament. Parliament will then have what should be the best information on which to make up its mind as to whether the particular public work should be initiated or not, and if Parliament, in face of that, arrives at a wrong conclusion, then it will be the fault of Parliament. But I repeat what I said in moving the second reading, that members cannot get away from the responsibility of Parliament by harping on the responsibility of the Government. It is a responsibility of members of Parliament to inform themselves as well as they can in regard to every project which is placed before them. Here is offered a method of doing so. If Parliament rejects this method and, in face of that, comes to wrong decisions, then it is an abrogation of responsibility by Parliament and not by the Government. That covers the matter so far as the initiation of public works is concerned. Then as regards existing utilities: whenever it is found that things are not as they should be, and when the Government have investigated the matter so far as they can through their responsible officers, for instance the railways, surely it is not an unreasonable proposal that a committee thoroughly representative of Parliament, and answerable to Parliament and not to the Government, should be called in to investigate and report. I see nothing unreasonable or improper in the proposal. Mr. Holmes, supported by Mr. Cornell, said that if a committee of this kind were appointed to inquire into the matter of railways, the Commissioner, if he had any sense of dignity or responsibility of his office, would kick them out of his office. To my mind that is illustrative of the difficulty that members have found in arriving at arguments in opposition to the Bill. Do those two members suggest that it would be incompetent for the Governor-in-Council to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the workings of the railways?

Hon. J. Cornell: No.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Such a thing has been done before both here and elsewhere, and if the Governor-in-Council appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the railways, the Commissioner would not kick the Commission out of his office. If he did so, he would forfeit not only his office but his liberty. If under this Bill the working of the railways was referred by resolution of Parliament to the committee,

the committee would have all the powers of a Royal Commission and the Commissioner of Railways would be bound, and no doubt would willingly tender to the committee the same respect as he would be compelled to tender to a Royal Commission.

Hon. J. Cornell: And if he was weighed in the balance and found wanting, what then?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Commissioner would not object to such an investigation. He knows as well as anyone else that the department he is running is responsible for a great deal of public indignation and for very heavy losses. He says these things are incidental to existing circumstances. He speaks of the high price of coal and of wages. He says he is doing the best he can. Would any man taking up that position resent investigation by a committee? I am not prepared to say that a careful and complete investigation by a committee, possessing the powers the proposed committee would have, would fail to reveal some method by which improvement could be accomplished.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: And perhaps fairer rates for the goldfields.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Commissioner admittedly has large powers under the Act, but the Act does not make him a present of the railways of the State. The railways are the property of the people, and are subject to the legislation of Parliament.

Hon. J. Cornell: But the Government will not stand up to the Commissioner when he exercises his powers.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Some members have spoken as if the committee would have the power to wander indiscriminately into the office of the Commissioner of Railways or anyone else. I took a note of some of the extraordinary remarks which were made by one member. He referred to the committee meddling with the railways. The committee would have no power to do anything of the kind. The powers of the committee are plainly set out in the Bill. The powers go to that extent and no further. The committee would inquire into the working of the railways when they were directed to do so by a vote of Parliament. They could not do it on their own initiative.

Hon. J. W. Hickey: Would they have power to investigate the fares and freights to the goldfields?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Certainly, if the matter were referred to them by Parliament. They would be able to inquire into the working of the railways generally, if Parliament referred the matter to them. If the committee were constituted, one of the first things Parliament would see the wisdom of referring to them no doubt would be the administration of the railways, because this question most vitally affects not only the financial position of the State but the well-being of the country generally.

Hon. J. Cornell: And that would occupy them six months at least.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I would ask members to bear in mind the nature of the arguments which have been advanced against the Bill. I will endeavour to set them out very briefly. One was that it would lead to the corruption of members of Parliament and that they would be bound to the Government by the receipt of, or the prospect of, receiving an additional £200 a year. If the House thinks that the chosen men of each House of Parliament would be men of that calibre, I counsel them to throw out the Bill and, by doing so, to place upon Parliament the impress of their opinion. The second argument was that the Committee would be a creature of the Government, and that it would change in personnel as the Government changed. That is entirely wrong. The Bill is so prepared that the committee shall be entirely independent of the Government. Probably not more than one member of the committee would owe his original election to the Government, but, having been elected to the committee, the Government would have no power whatever to remove him, and so far from existing only during the life of the Government, the committee would exist during the life of Parliament. The third objection was that the committee would relieve the Government of responsibility. Suppose for a moment that were true: Is it an argument against the Bill? If good is likely to be accomplished, is it an argument against the Bill that in some matters here and there it might relieve the Government of responsibility? Is that a sound argument against the Bill? It is an argument which would never be used by a person unless he was imbued with bitter hostility to the Government, and a desire that at any cost the Government should be overthrown and that their difficulties should be increased and nothing done to reduce them. Then it was said that the committee would lead to the creation of a big new department and a lot of expense. There is no reason to suppose that it will be more expensive proportionately than similar committees in other States of the Commonwealth. Then it was argued that the committee would be able to get no more information than the Government can get. That is utterly contrary to fact. The committee would have power to obtain evidence on oath from quarters not available to Ministers at the present time. Then it was said that the committee would replace the Government and do away with the need for Ministers. That is surely an absolutely childish argument; I can find no other phrase to describe it. The committee would have no administrative responsibility whatever. All the administrative work of the Government would go on as at present. All the committee would do would be to investigate matters referred to it by Parliament. Then it was said that the Commissioner of Railways would order the committee off the premises. That is a statement to which I

have already replied. Is it on arguments of this kind that a Bill of this description is to be rejected? I can find no others, save one adduced by Mr. Holmes, that the committee would have power to put people in gaol, and that some of these people would be members of Parliament. If members of Parliament deserve what Mr. Holmes and Sir Edward Wittenoom have said about them, most people would say it is high time that some person had power to put them in gaol. As a matter of fact, the argument is based on an absolute misconception of the Bill. The committee would have no power to put anyone in gaol; they would have no power to fine a person even a shilling. The Act would ease certain obligations on people, and certain penalties are provided for offending against the Act. Anyone who offended against the Act would be prosecuted in the courts of the country and, until so prosecuted and condemned, no penalty could be imposed. The committee would have no more power to send people to gaol than the hon. member himself has. Another argument advanced in opposition to the Bill was that it differed from the previous Bill, because that referred only to new works and this measure embraced existing utilities. Surely that is a desirable addition, but even if it is not, it is not so material a difference as would justify the rejection of the Bill. Then we have the final argument to which a lot of members seem to attach a good deal of importance, that there are no public works to be carried out in the immediate future. Many members who do not propose to support me will see how ridiculous that argument is. If we are to make ourselves secure, altogether apart from the development of the resources of the country, we must spend a great deal of money during the next 10 years in making provision for increased population. I think I have now covered all the arguments which have been advanced against the Bill. Most of them are based on an entire misconception of what the Bill means. On the other hand I put forward one point: In 1911 a similar proposal was submitted to Parliament, and I ask members, would it have been well or ill with Western Australia if the proposal had been given effect to? It would have meant the saving of millions of money to this State. We can have no better guide as to the future than the experience of the past, and I trust that the Bill will be passed.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	6
Noes	..	..	..	..	14

Majority against .. 8

AYES.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. J. W. Hickey
	(Teller.)

NOMS.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. H. Harris	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. R. J. Lyuu	Hon. A. Lovekin
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived; Bill defeated.

BILL—PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION LANDS.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it disagreed to the amendment made by the Council.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendment No. 3 made by the Council but that it had disagreed to amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

BILL—COURTS OF SESSION.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Constitution Further Amendment.
2. Health Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—GRAIN.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 1st December.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.4]: The appearance of this Bill reminds us of the closing hours of last session, when a similar measure was rejected on the second reading. We have lived to be thanked and complimented for what was at the time termed the rash action of this Chamber. The thanks of those who benefited by the rejection of that measure should be directed, in particular, to Mr. Greig, he having been the means of enabling at any rate some of us to view that Bill in its true light. When the Leader of the House moved the second reading of the present Bill I asked him, by way of interjection, what consideration the Commonwealth Government were receiving for the aid they were granting the elevator company. The Leader of the House replied that they were not receiving any consideration at all.

The Minister for Education: Only getting interest on the money advanced.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: That answer was sufficient to warrant my making an investigation into the causes leading up to the introduction of this Bill. I now propose to give hon. members generally the benefit of the information I have secured, for I believe it has not been the privilege of every member of the Chamber to peruse the agreement which led to the introduction of this measure. It so happens that on the 13th August, 1920, an agreement was entered into between Basil L. Murray, managing director of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. of Perth, Western Australia, and the Commonwealth of Australia through its representative the Prime Minister, the Honourable William Morris Hughes; and it so happens that on that occasion the Commonwealth Government took every precaution to thoroughly safeguard their interests to the fullest possible extent. I shall show presently that this Bill really amounts to an endorsement of the Federal Government's attitude, that every possible protection must be afforded them before they grant anything to the company. Now let me extract briefly from the agreement its leading features:—

The formation and the registration of a company to be called the West Australian Grain Growers' Co-operative Elevators Ltd., with a capital of £1,500,000, and confined to bona fide grain farmers in Western Australia. The memorandum and articles of association, and every amendment thereof, to be subject to the approval of the Commonwealth. Until all moneys advanced by the Commonwealth to the company have been repaid, approval in writing by the Commonwealth before the company can sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of or mortgage any of its property or buildings, whether leasehold or freehold, or any interest therein. Further, the company shall not traffic in grain, but act only as operators of silos and elevators. The promoter of the company must take all necessary steps to obtain from the State of Western Australia legislative and executive authority to carry out its objects.

I ask hon. members to note that particularly, because it was stated that the Commonwealth Government were getting no consideration. We now see that the Bill before us is really an endorsement of the promissory note, given in the form of this agreement, by the elevator company to the Commonwealth Parliament.

Immediately after registration, the company must submit to the Commonwealth for its approval the proposed sites for silos and elevators, and shall erect its silos and elevators only on sites approved by the Commonwealth for that purpose. If the site or proposed site of any proposed silo or elevator is not vested in the company for an estate in fee simple, the company shall acquire and hold such site upon terms and conditions which will enable it to

fully carry out all obligations it may incur to the Commonwealth under or in pursuance of the agreement. The company must employ to design and supervise the erection of its silos and elevators, engineers nominated by the company for that purpose, and who must be approved by the Commonwealth. Contractors for the erection must be approved by the Commonwealth, and under a contract or contracts previously approved of by the Commonwealth. The estimated cost of the silos and elevators to be erected by the company for the purposes of this agreement shall be £800,000. The company shall expend one-third of the total cost to the company of the silos and elevators. The Commonwealth will then make advances to the company by way of loan under the conditions of the agreement when (a) not less than 300,000 shares have been allotted to shareholders approved by the Commonwealth, and paid up to 10s. per share, and (b) not less than £100,000 has been provided and expended by the company in the erection of silos and elevators, and (c) a person nominated by the Commonwealth for that purpose has certified that the erection of the silos and elevators has been carried out to his satisfaction up to the date of the certificate, and (d) all the conditions of the agreement to be complied with by the company to that date have been complied with to the satisfaction of the Commonwealth, and (e) the company has executed and delivered to the Commonwealth first mortgages and other securities over its assets real and personal, including uncalled capital. Such mortgages and securities shall be prepared by the Commonwealth, and shall contain all provisions required by the Commonwealth, and the expense thereof shall be paid by the company to the Commonwealth. The total amount to be advanced by the Commonwealth to the company not to exceed the sum of £550,000, by instalments at the rate of £2 for every £1 provided and expended by the company up to the first £100,000 expended by the company on the erection of silos and elevators. Interest at the rate of 6 per cent. to be paid by the company to the Commonwealth, with a proviso that in the event of the Commonwealth having to borrow money on which the interest exceeds 6 per cent., the company shall pay interest to the Commonwealth equal to that paid in respect thereof. Repayment of amounts advanced by the Commonwealth, together with interest thereon, shall be made by the company to the Commonwealth by 20 equal annual instalments, the first of which annual instalments shall be due immediately on the expiration of 12 months from the date of starting point. The Treasurer of the Commonwealth may fix the said date of starting point whether the silos and elevators have been com-

pleted or not. Penalties are provided for in the event of failure to comply with all the conditions of repayment of principal and interest on the date appointed as the due date, and includes compound interest. The agreement is duly signed by Mr. Murray for the company and by Mr. Hughes for the Commonwealth, and it is witnessed by M. L. Shepherd. Hon. members will now realise the true position. Failing the information which I have just quoted, I was somewhat in the dark as to what was the real meaning of this Bill, a measure which is the outcome of an agreement between a private company of this State and the Commonwealth Government. It is one of the conditions set out in that agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the company, which implies that the Parliament of Western Australia is cognisant of all the particulars and is willing to give to the proposed company a monopoly of the handling of wheat in bulk for 25 years. The Bill sets out that the company shall construct terminal elevators at Fremantle, Bunbury, Albany, and Geraldton. The amount of capital set forth in the Bill leads me to wonder where the money will be found for the building of other elevators than that at Fremantle. It will be a very long time indeed before much money is spent outside Fremantle.

Hon. J. Ewing: The company have to build all the elevators within five years.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: They have no more hope of doing that than has the hon. member of flying. It is true the Commonwealth Government have been informed that it may be difficult to raise the full amount from the wheat growers, and some modification has been made by the Commonwealth Government. It was agreed that if 240,000 shares were allotted the amount would be reduced to £440,000. The Minister, in moving the second reading, informed us that 256,000 shares were already applied for. It is illuminating to find that the farmers have been induced to invest in shares to that number. I doubt whether all the applicants for shares are fully aware of the requirements of the Companies Act. Some of them may have thought that no harm would be done in applying for shares in order to give the company a start, and that they would not be expected to pay up any large amount. But the provisions of the Companies Act are very plain. If 256,000 shares have been applied for, they will be allotted, and the full amount will have to be paid by those who applied for the shares. It is to be borne in mind also that when the shares were applied for, the farmer was getting a very high price for his wheat, whereas there are indications that the price of wheat must fall. Possibly by the time the farmer gets his final payment for the new wheat, he will have very little, if anything, over 4s. per bushel net, which may leave him in some difficulty in respect of the payment for the

shares he has applied for. It is our duty to protect the farmer.

Hon. V. Hamersley: To teach him his business.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: No, but men in the backblocks, out of touch with city life, are not able to form judgments as quickly as can city men, and therefore I regard it as my duty to do what I can to protect the farmers. It is informative to find that in the Estimates of the Federal Government for the year ended the 20th June, 1922, there appears, on page 395, the following item, "Loan to Westralian Farmers Ltd. for the erection of wheat silos and other appliances, £20,000." Then there is the following footnote, "The estimated total amount to be loaned, subject to the conditions of agreement with the company, is £550,000." It will therefore be inferred that the company have already received £20,000; at all events, provision is made for them to receive it, notwithstanding that in the agreement it is set out that before the Commonwealth advances any of the money, £100,000 shall have been expended by the company in the erection of silos and elevators.

The Minister for Education: Do you say that £20,000 has been spent?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: No, as a matter of fact, I want some information in respect of it from the Minister.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: It is the estimated expenditure for the current year.

The Minister for Education: Probably put on in the assumption that the company would have spent the money.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: We were informed that the company had received something like £19,000 as the result of canvassing, the cost of which was £3,500. It does not augur favourably for the successful completion of this undertaking. It seems to me necessary that somebody should come to the assistance of the farmers in these negotiations. Clause 3 provides for a monopoly for 25 years. Think what this means, viewed in the light of the efforts being put forward to induce immigrants to come and settle upon our lands, to go in for farming, with this pending, that they will have to make arrangements for the handling of their wheat in bulk, and probably will have to take shares in this company. When we consider the interest required on this loan, together with the cost of converting wagons for the handling of grain, it is very doubtful whether the new system will prove much cheaper to the farmer than the old. Moreover, the price of jute goods is very much lower to-day than it was even 12 months ago, and there is every indication that in the near future the cost of bags will be practically back to normal. The farmer will not find it an easy proposition to cart his wheat in bulk from the farm to the siding, discharge his wheat without loss of time and get back for another load. Certain clauses in the Bill are taken from the Canadian Act. But the conditions in Australia are very different from those in Canada, where the grain

is not as dry as is ours, and so the husk will not leave the grain as it does here. Consequently, the wheat has to be stacked and handled differently from our grain. At present our wheat is stripped by machinery and is ready for bagging from the reaper and binder and easily collected and carted to the siding. If the Bill becomes law, the farmer must make suitable provision for carrying his grain in bulk, and there must be special trucks or other conveniences at the siding awaiting him, so that he can get back without loss of time. I do not see where the Bill guarantees that to the farmer.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Read Clause 23.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I have done so, and I want to know what Clause 23 means. Again, the proposed silos and elevators will not be large enough to contain the whole of the wheat to be harvested, and, therefore, the farmer will have to expend a considerable amount in bags for storage, or else will have to build his own silos. Taking all these things into consideration, I cannot believe that the new system will represent a big saving to the farmer; in fact, I doubt whether it will be any saving at all. As the Leader of the House pointed out in the closing remarks of a speech he made just now, we in Western Australia are as a man fighting with our hands tied behind our backs. The more I study this agreement the more I am convinced that the Commonwealth Government are not only intent upon tying our hands behind our backs but are showing an inclination to put the noose around our necks and strangle us altogether, when it snits them. I can conceive no other object than that it is their endeavour to interfere with the liberties and encroach upon the sovereign rights of the State. So long as I am in public life I shall do my utmost to preserve the sovereign rights of the State as against any encroachment on the part of the Federal Parliament. Provision is made in the Bill whereby the Government of the State shall provide moneys for the purpose of remunerating the board, which the Bill proposes to appoint, and also to pay the salaries of officers and employees. That means endorsing a bill to a firm who refuses to accept that bill without an approved endorsement. There is no doubt in my mind that the Commonwealth Government require some other security than that which is provided by this company for the amount it is proposed to lend. For that purpose it very cunningly says that it is imperative that legislation shall be passed by the Parliament of Western Australia before it goes on with its undertaking. There can be no doubt about the monopoly clause of this Bill. We have had experience in the past of monopolies being granted to one firm and another, the most glaring instance of which is the monopoly in regard to sugar production. This monopoly has cost the people of Western Australia no less than two million pounds over and above what it would have cost but for the existence of this monopoly. It behoves us to be careful before we grant

a monopoly to this or any other company. In the circumstances I can have no alternative but to oppose the second reading of the Bill in the interests of those men who are working outback, the farmers of Western Australia.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 6th December, 1911.

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

QUESTION—STATE SAVINGS BANK.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Premier: If any agreement is entered into by the Government with the Commonwealth Bank to transfer the State Savings Bank, will he see that the privileges now enjoyed by the benefit societies dealing with the Savings Bank are retained to the societies before any transfer is agreed to?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

QUESTION—STATE BATTERIES AND GOLD PREMIUM.

Mr. MUNSIE (without notice) asked the Colonial Secretary: Will he supply information with regard to the charges made by State batteries in connection with the treatment of tailings (sands and slimes) and state on what basis the Government settle with prospectors in regard to the gold premium?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (for the Minister for Mines) replied: Under regulations tailings are purchased from customers immediately on agreement as to assay after a crushing has been effected. The department pays £4 per ounce for the gold purchased

and after receipt of the premiums from the Gold Producers' Association for the accounting period in which the crushing is effected, pays to the prospector the full amount of the premium received.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General, in pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act of 1904, the thirty-first report for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1911, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

SELECT COMMITTEE—HOSPITALS BILL.

On motion by Mr. Gibson the time for bringing up the report of the Select Committee was extended for two weeks.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—CONSTITUTION FURTHER AMENDMENT.

Order of the Day read for the third reading of this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: As this Bill alters the Constitution Act it is necessary to have an absolute majority of the House on both the second and third readings. I will put the question, "That the Bill be now read a third time," and if there is any dissentient voice I will divide the House. If not, I will take it that the third reading is carried unanimously. I have counted the House, and there is an absolute majority present.

Question put, and two members having declared in the negative the House divided with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	32
Noes	..	..	10

Majority for .. 22

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Carter	Mr. O'Loghlin
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Collier	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Simons
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Davies	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Heron	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Willcock
Mr. C. C. Maley	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Mann	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Marshall	(Teller.)
Mr. McCallum	