

the Notice Paper, one of which, for the same reason Mr. Drew mentioned just now, I do not propose to go on with, that is the Money Lenders Bill, as we will not see it on the statute-book. The other Bill, the Landlord and Tenant Bill, has been at the bottom of the Notice Paper on nearly every occasion since I moved the second reading, and it is a measure of considerable importance.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Let me say that I simply moved the adjournment of the House and now I ask leave to withdraw it; but the honourable member in his remarks would lead one to believe that I have put his Bill low down on the Notice Paper so that it could not be discussed. That is wrong. Two days last week the Bill could have been discussed, and now to-day Mr. Kingsmill, who moved the adjournment of the debate, is not prepared to go on. It is at his request that I moved that the House be adjourned. However, I now ask leave to withdraw my motion.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: Sir—

The PRESIDENT: This question cannot be debated.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: I wish to explain.

The PRESIDENT: On a point of personal explanation the honourable member can proceed.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: I have no objection to the House adjourning, but I want the Colonial Secretary to promise that he will give this Bill a prominent place on the Notice Paper so that there will be an opportunity of dealing with it this session. I understand now that Mr. Kingsmill has no desire to speak on the second reading. All I wish to say by way of reply is to quote the judgment of Chief Justice Parker on a case which necessitates this very important amendment. It can be got through the second reading and taken to another place. I think the Bill is of sufficient importance in the public interest to have it on the statute-book. Therefore the Minister will probably give me an opportunity of having it in a prominent place on the Notice Paper.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes; it will not be taken out of its order.

Leave to withdraw motion refused.  
Question (adjournment) put and passed.

*House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 23rd November, 1909.*

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

### QUESTION—JAM FACTORY, STATE ASSISTANCE.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1. What is the amount of money the Government propose to loan to the Donnybrook Co-Operative Fruit Preserving Company? 2. What security does the company offer for the loan, whether personal or buildings and plant? 3. If buildings and plant, what is the value of same? 4. What would be the commercial value of buildings and plant if they were not used in accordance with the intentions of the company when the loan was applied for, or ceased to be used for such purpose after loan is granted? 5. For what term is the loan to be granted? 6. What rate of interest is to be charged? 7. Does the Government intend to assist the company with trading capital?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1. Pound for pound on the

expenditure by the company in the purchase of a site, erection and equipment of a factory, with a limit of £1,000. 2, The land, buildings, and machinery. 3, The land has been purchased, but the buildings and plant are not yet in existence. 4, Answered by No. 3. 5, Term to be arranged. 6, Four per cent. per annum. 7, This has not yet been determined.

#### QUESTION—RAILWAY RUNNING RIGHTS, KURRAWANG.

Mr. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that the Kurrawang Firewood Supply Company has entered into arrangements with the Commissioner of Railways to permit the company's wagons and engine to run as wood trains on the Government railways between Kurrawang and the Boulder Mines? 2, Has any arrangement been made to permit the company's trucks conveying firewood to be hauled over the Government railways?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, Yes, a number of the company's trucks which have been passed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer will be permitted to run on the Government railways with firewood for the mines.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, By-laws of the Guildford Municipal Council. 2, By-laws of the Wiluna Local Board of Health.

By the Minister for Agriculture: Report of the Under Secretary for Lands for 1908-9.

#### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Administration Act Amendment.
- 2, Coolgardie Recreation Reserve Revestment.
- 3, Permanent Reserves Rededication (No. 1).
- 4, Supply Bill (£384,000).

#### APPROPRIATION MESSAGES.

Messages from the Governor received and read recommending the following Bills:—

- 1, Land Act Amendment.
- 2, Agricultural Lands Purchase.

#### BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

#### BILL—NORTH PERTH TRAMWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

#### BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

#### BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

##### *Second Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. James Mitchell) in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been rendered necessary largely because we have adopted the system of survey before selection. One naturally is averse to introducing amendments to the Land Act, and we only do so when it is rendered necessary by some marked change. Under the system of survey before selection, with the preparation of the land before the settlers acquire it, a great deal of loan money is expended in connection with services, such as water supply, roads, and other improvements, and probably the most important amendment proposed by the Bill is in connection with the expenditure of these loan moneys. It is necessary that a considerable amount of loan money should be spent in connection with the preparatory work. The Government desire that this loan fund should be protected, and the Bill provides that the money so expended is to be returned to loan fund. The expenditure is to be cal-

culated half-yearly and returned to the loan account in equal quarterly payments spread over 20 years. We sell our lands on terms extending over 20 years, and we have thought it advisable that the money spent from loan, and which is really money providing peculiar advantages to the man who selects land, should be taken from the proceeds of the land sales as they are paid into the Treasury, and returned to the loan account, whence they come. The land is sold after survey and after classification, and is sold according to its value. It is necessary, of course, that when money has been spent in improving the land by this particular kind of work, it should be added to the value of the land. This, of course, creates a difficulty sometimes, particularly in connection with the settler of limited means. We propose in the Bill that the payment of the survey fee shall be spread over the whole term. We also provide that where land is sold at more than 10s. an acre the price to be paid during the first three years shall not exceed 6d. per annum per acre. This, of course, will mean a tremendous assistance in the early stage of development when the selector gets no return from his land. Under the system obtaining up till now, if a selector were charged 15s. per acre together with his survey fee, the rent and the survey fee would amount, in the first year, to £45 15s. Under the Bill the rent each year for the first three years will be limited to £25 on 1,000 acres. It will be understood that the unpaid portion of this first three years will be added to the final 17 years of the lease. It goes without saying that when a selector has reached the producing stage, it is much easier for him to meet the increased payments than it is during the first three years of his occupancy. The advantages to be derived from this amendment are more than appear at first sight. At times money is expended in many directions by the Government in improving the holdings, such as by ringbarking to a considerable extent, and that means that when this is added to the cost of the land the selector, under the old system, in addition to his rent and survey fees, had to repay the

value of improvements in payments spread over ten years. Under the system proposed in the Bill this repayment will be spread over 20 years, and the selector will be relieved during the first three years of any payments. The department will take care to provide that the improvements are fully maintained. In such case the selector will not have to pay more for his improved holding than if he went on virgin country. It is necessary with this system of payments of surveys from loan funds that the cost of the surveys should be returned to the loan funds, and that we should take power to charge full survey fees for land applied for under selection before survey. Provision is made to extend the payments by regulations. During the first three years the free selector will not have to pay more than £25 per 1,000 acres, and afterwards he will be required to pay over a period to be fixed by regulation the full amount of the survey fee in addition to the £25. It is also provided by the Bill, and this will mean a good deal to the selectors, that where a man selects several adjoining blocks, one survey of the whole will suffice. At present it is necessary that where a man applies for three or four blocks he shall have them surveyed separately. That means running many additional lines, which adds to the cost of the survey. It will be possible for the department under the Bill to make one survey of the whole, and this will result in considerable saving to the selector. This is particularly necessary in the case of grazing leases. It frequently happens that where a grazing lease is applied for small areas of first-class land are contained within the area. This consists of land that could not be sold to any selector other than the man who holds third-class land as well. I desire to have the power to enforce improvements, such as are enforced under first-class conditions, for these particular blocks of land, situated although they may be inside a grazing lease and even, as so frequently happens, when they are in small patches of not more than 100 acres. Under the old system each of

these blocks of first-class land had to be surveyed, but under the proposed amendment there will be merely one survey so that the four lines shall run right round the grazing leases, and we shall have power to enforce improvement conditions on these small areas of first-class land. Members will realise that is an important provision, and that it is quite unnecessary to have these additional survey lines, which mean great expense both to the selector and the department. The system of survey before selection is proving very satisfactory to selectors notwithstanding the fact that it means all the land is priced according to its value. It means, however, to the department a very heavy outlay. From the experience of the past three months we see it is necessary to have at least one million acres ahead of selection. That means very costly surveys, for to survey a million acres into 1,000-acre or smaller blocks naturally costs a considerable amount, and because of that, and as so much land has to be ready, we have been obliged to charge up part of the surveys to Loan Fund. The area of 1,000 acres may seem unnecessarily large to members, but when one remembers the enormous areas over which the agricultural population is scattered in Western Australia, from Northampton in the North to Albany in the South—and every district claims that its lands should be surveyed and sold—that the land varies from very wet in the South to a somewhat irregular rainfall at Nangeenan, it will be realised that we have to survey every class of country, suiting climate and rainfall, in addition to the soil, and survey blocks to suit the requirements of every district. It has been found that the system of throwing open a small number of blocks each week or fortnight is not as satisfactory as we hoped it would be, the reason being that men come from distant parts of the State and make application for land, and after they have made an inspection at considerable cost they find they are but one of many applicants for the same block. The land board have to decide who is to have the block, and the disappointed applicants, after being put to a great ex-

pense, are compelled to return home without having succeeded in securing land. We propose to push on the work of survey so as to have open for selection all the land that might be asked for from day to day. If, as we hope we shall be able to do during the next three months, we throw open a large area of first-class land, surveyed, provided with roads, and to some extent with water, and inspected by the Agricultural Bank, it will not be necessary for intending applicants to go away disappointed and dissatisfied as they do now. We desire for that reason also power to spend a large sum of money this year, a sum approaching £100,000 in the preparation of land for the settlers. We propose too to provide power to impose special improvement conditions on land now in the hands of the Crown adjacent to railways, or proposed railways. For instance, if a line is proposed and surveyed, the lands within 5, 10, or 15 miles of that railway which are proposed to be sold, will have special improvement conditions placed upon them. We desire that those improvements shall be sufficient to make the land pay in a reasonable time, and we take power to impose upon that land sufficient to bring about its improvement within a reasonable time. It is provided that the purchase money shall be spent in improvements in five years, and we propose to make an addition that will make for the more rapid development if thought advisable.

Mr. George: Do you propose to give sidings, and other facilities?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We always give all the conveniences possible in order to enable the settler to market his produce. In any event the conditions to be imposed against the land will not press hardly upon anyone, for they will be within the amount the Agricultural Bank is prepared to lend. The only thing is that the improvements must be affected a little more rapidly than is the case under the ordinary conditions of the Land Act. Under the old Act where three or four persons held land under residential conditions, those conditions could be performed by one of the number, but

under the amending Bill I am now introducing the residential conditions in such circumstances are imposed upon each of the partners. If three men join together and select land under the clauses imposing residence, they must all reside on the land. It is possible for a man to select land without the residential qualifications, but in that event considerably more improvements are necessary than under the residential conditions.

Mr. Collier: If three men are partners they will all have to reside on the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, if they select under the residential clauses. In the latter circumstances they are relieved of about 50 per cent. of improvements. This provision is very necessary.

Mr. Bath: The Minister might explain how one man can fulfil the residential conditions for each block.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is a provision under the old Act by which each man holding 1,000 acres under residential conditions must comply with the conditions. It is provided in Clause 2 that the Crown reserves to itself all phosphatic deposits discovered. I have already explained the proviso included in Clause 3 under which we propose to dispense with the surveys of internal boundaries where several selections join. Clause 5 provides an addition to Section 126 of the principal Act. This is necessary in order to remove an apparent conflict with Section 114 which has caused considerable trouble in the past. Under the principal Act a timber lessee has power if he thinks fit to surrender a square mile of country. The rental is £20 a square mile a year, and the lessee has the right to reduce his rent to the extent of his surrender. If a selector, however, takes up 100 acres of the lease, he has to allow the timber company six months in which to remove the timber. Notwithstanding that the timber company remove the timber, the rent is reduced proportionately. We propose to bring the sections into line so that the reduction in the rent can only take place when the area is reduced by at least one square mile of country. I hope members will give this Bill serious consideration. We are endeavouring in every way possible

to make the settlement on the land as easy as possible for the selector, particularly in the early days of his settlement. The policy of the Government is to provide railway export facilities and other conveniences, and of course this means considerable expenditure of money. We have asked that we should be allowed to spend loan moneys in connection with this work. We propose to do this in a decent fashion and the loan expenditure will be returned as we collect as the result of the work undertaken. If hon. members desire to move amendments to the Bill, I hope they will place them on the Notice Paper. It would be a pity to alter the clauses of the Bill without giving serious consideration to any amendments that may be suggested. I have much pleasure in moving—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by Mr. Bath, debate adjourned.

## BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE.

### *Second Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell) in moving the second reading said: This a consolidating and amending Bill. Before referring to its provisions I should like to say a word or two in connection with the working of the Act we propose to amend. The principal reason for amending the Act is that we require the increased capital, which at present stands at £200,000. In the Bill before the House it is proposed to increase that amount to £400,000. The operation of the Act in the past has resulted in the satisfactory settlement of a large number of people on the land. It has resulted in bringing into a high state of cultivation many thousands of acres adjacent to the railways which would have remained unimproved and as mere sheep-walks but for the operation of the measure. The cutting up of this land has provided also a good deal of work, and has resulted in considerable freight being carried over the railways, and now that we are actively pushing on the

policy of railway construction it seems to me that this legislation is more necessary than ever. Hon. members realise that the Act has applied only to large estates.

Mr. Underwood: Some of the owners have realised it too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Act can only apply to large estates, and so far I think the purchase of many estates has resulted satisfactorily. At any rate we know a great deal of work has been done on these repurchased estates. Our duty after cutting up this land was to see that it was made productive, and assist to make the railways pay. This would not be possible if the people who owned agricultural land did not do their duty by it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Make the owners improve the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I desire to give the hon. member and everybody else the opportunity of doing their duty. We have heard a good deal from members about people owning land and keeping it unimproved, but it is not an easy matter to bring about legislation which will have the result of developing that land, and I think the most expeditious way of doing it is by repurchase. Hon. members know that when the Government proceeds to buy land, they get it at a very cheap price. Whenever we have repurchased estates, we have secured them in nearly every instance at considerably below their value, and our desire after repurchase is to make these lands produce freight for the railways.

Mr. Heitmann: Like the Stirling Estate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So it is that we are asking that members should pass this measure, which will permit the vote for repurchases being increased from £200,000 to £400,000. It is our desire to bring about an alteration in the condition of affairs. We desire that the land which is held in large areas adjacent to the railways shall be cut up and settled. It must be remembered too that the purchaser pays, and that the State is not called upon to pay any portion of the purchase money or interest in connection with the purchase. Members

must agree that the State gets a good bargain and it gets all the contingent advantages of land settlement, while the selector has to pay everything that the State has to pay. The limit at present is £200,000 and of this we have expended £188,965, leaving a balance of £11,034. We have repurchased 18 estates totalling in area 217,748 acres for £131,372, and including interest and expenses £275,216.

Mr. Johnson: What did these estates originally cost the sellers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I daresay they cost the sellers a good deal more in some cases than they got from the Crown. Hon. members who are now farmers will know something about the cost of effecting improvements. As I have stated, we purchased 217,000 acres for roughly £131,000, which amounts to a little more than 10s. per acre—a very reasonable sum indeed, and including interest and expenses, £275,216.

Mr. Heitman: They are not improved.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: One could not expect much improvement for a little over 10s. an acre. The price fixed for the sale of lots was £272,085, and the amount realised was £252,205, and the price fixed for lots unsold is £22,850. We must add to this the amount derived at interest, which will reach something like £35,000, so that the result as far as the State is concerned is satisfactory. Of the thirteen of the eighteen estates disposed of only £500 worth of land remains unsold, and this land consists mainly of suburban blocks and that result too must be regarded as satisfactory.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Is Oakabella sold?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is only just cut up and it is being sold.

Mr. Heitmann: They are not buying it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are buying it. The estates not altogether sold are the Marjidin, 1349 acres; Dudawa, 959 acres; Brunswick, 1599 acres; and Oakabella, 11,000 acres. Oakabella was purchased only a few months ago and is now being subdivided. I have no doubt it will sell readily in the near future. I know something of the Oakabella

estate, having driven over it a few months ago, and people who acquire any portion of it will be able to make comfortable homes for themselves there. These 11,000 acres will find ready purchasers I am sure. Something over 13,000 of the Oakabella estate have now been sold. The repurchased estates in the wheat lands are Coondle, Mt. Hardy, Throssell and Warding, Norman, Gwambygine, Cold Harbour, Woodlands, and Mt. Erin, and they are all doing well. I know more of the conditions in the Eastern districts, and I can inform members that the estates there have provided homes for many people, who are very much more prosperous as a result of these subdivisions. Just a few years ago on the Throssell estate there were a few thousand sheep being run; to-day this is a place of many farms and one of the show wheat lands of the State, all because of the repurchase Act. If it had not been for this Act, it might still have been a sheep-walk.

Mr. Heitmann: Tell us about the Stirling estate where they have to use boats.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Stirling estate was not purchased by this Government, and it is not quite satisfactory to-day, but it is a fine estate nevertheless, and it will become a fine estate when it is properly managed. I realise that there are difficulties there to-day.

Mr. Heitman: And you are leaving the settlers to fight those difficulties.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the hon. member will let me have the opportunity of saying what I have to say. I know he would like to say a great deal in connection with the Stirling estate and the settlement there. That property was secured and cut up unwisely I admit, and the people there have been in difficulties in consequence; but I hope as a result of the drainage scheme—

Mr. Heitmann: It is the drainage scheme that they are complaining about. It is that which has forced them to use boats.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The scheme which is being carried out will have the effect of sweetening the land,

and the result will be that it will be possible to put it to use in the way that it was originally intended. At any rate I can promise the hon. member that as soon as possible I will send several officers of the department down so as to look into the matter and straighten out several things which are unsatisfactory. Though that estate is probably one of the most unsatisfactory we have, there is no reason why we should not make it successful.

Mr. Heitmann: Why do you not try?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We intend to do so. We have seen the people and we have promised to do everything we can for them.

Mr. Underwood: Your promises are not sustaining; that is what they complain about.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It might be as well to make a comparison between the repurchases which have been effected in this State and the repurchases in some other States. In New South Wales they have expended £1,123,000 in the purchase of 341,000 acres; in Victoria they have expended £1,471,000 on the purchase of 211,140 acres, and the authority there is to expend in any one year £500,000 on the repurchase of estates. It is provided there also that if any of this £500,000 remains unexpended it may be added to the next year's £500,000, so really they provide £500,000 in each year which may be expended in the repurchase of estates. Queensland does a great deal in the repurchasing of estates. Up to 1907 they expended £1,057,000 in the repurchase of 409,000 acres. We desire to follow in the footsteps of the other States, Victoria, for instance, which is doing so much in connection with the subdivision of large estates, and in connection with land settlement generally. In many small particulars the Bill is brought into line with the Land Act. It is provided that land may be sold with or without residence. The minimum age of applicants is reduced from 18 years to 16 years to fit in with the Land Act, and a maximum area of 1,000 acres is provided except in

special cases where we repurchase an estate with extensive buildings. On the Oakabella estate, for instance, there are extensive buildings really in excess of the requirements of a man with 1,000 acres, and it would have been wise in the interests of the Government to have sold 2,000 acres around the Oakabella homestead. We have the same difficulty in connection with the Narra Tarra estate. There the homestead buildings far exceed anything a man selecting 1,000 acres would need, and we ask to be given power to increase the area to 2,000 acres in special cases by permission of the Governor-in-Council. We also provide that where an estate contains third-class land the provisions of the Land Act may apply, that is 1,000 acres of first-class land or an equivalent of second and third-class land can be selected by one applicant. I do not think there is anything more for me to say in connection with this measure. I hope members will pass the Bill, and give us the necessary power to repurchase estates adjacent to our railway lines in order that we may at least endeavour to make these railways pay in the most efficient manner, that is by developing the land alongside them. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Mr. Bolton: I desire to take the point that this is a money Bill and should be preceded by a Message.

The Minister for Lands: You are too late.

Mr. Bolton: I had no desire to interrupt the Minister, and I have no desire to throw out the Bill, but I believe we should be consistent.

The Premier: Is it necessary to have two Messages?

Mr. Bolton: Has a Message been announced?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. Bolton: Then very few heard it.

On motion by Mr. Bath, debate adjourned.

## BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

*Withdrawn.*

Order of the Day for second reading read.

The PREMIER asked leave to withdraw the Bill in order to have it re-introduced in the Legislative Council with the object of saving time.

Question passed; leave given; the Bill withdrawn.

## BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

*Withdrawn.*

Order of the Day for second reading read.

The PREMIER asked leave to withdraw the Bill in order to re-introduce it in the Legislative Council, with the object of saving time.

Mr. SCADDAN: Before we agreed to this it was due to members to see the Bill. On its introduction he had asked whether it was drafted in the *West Australian* office or in the Attorney General's office. We were practically informed it was printed, and if it was printed why was it not before members? We should know the contents of the Bill before agreeing to its withdrawal with the object of introducing it in another place. In any case it was a Bill that particularly concerned the Legislative Assembly, and, therefore, the Legislative Assembly should have the first preference in dealing with it. It would hardly in any sense concern the members of the Legislative Council, so there seemed to be no reason why it need be introduced in the Legislative Council. Why was it necessary to discharge it from the Notice Paper? If introduced in the Legislative Council it would have to be dealt with in the Legislative Assembly fully so there would be no object gained. At any rate, where was the Bill?

The PREMIER: The Bill was not printed; it was only drafted. The objects of the Bill were to make provision for the rolls being final so as to prevent any litigation such as had occurred in previous instances, to bring the electoral ma-



chinery into line as far as possible with that of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, and to make compulsory preferential voting.

Mr. Scaddan: Does it affect another place in any of its provisions?

The PREMIER: The matter of boundaries would affect the other place, also the provision as to the rolls being final. The machinery portion was introduced at the request of the Commonwealth people. Of course the boundaries would only be affected by a Redistribution of Seats Bill which it was not anticipated there would be opportunity of introducing this session. However, he was prepared go on with the Bill in the Assembly. It was only a question of facilitating the work.

Question passed; leave given; the Bill withdrawn.

## BILL—REDEMPTION OF ANNUITIES.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of two amendments made by the Legislative Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Taylor in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

No. 1, Clause 2, definition of "Annuity"—After the word "land," in line two, insert "for a period exceeding a life or lives in being."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL moved—

*That the Council's amendment be agreed to.*

The object of the amendment was to provide that the Act should not apply within the lifetime of any person or persons who were enjoying an annuity and who were in existence at the time the annuity was granted.

Question passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2, Clause 3, Sub-clause 5.—Strike out the word "may" in line three and insert "shall."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL moved—

*That the Council's amendment be agreed to.*

The Bill provided that the Judge, in order to ensure the parties to the trust under which the annuity might be given, might give directions for securing the investment of the amount arrived at on a valuation. The subclause gave power to the Judge to give directions to secure the investment. It was suggested that instead of its being optional it should be made mandatory on the Judge. It was not an important matter and there seemed to be no serious objection to the amendment.

Mr. KEENAN: The phraseology of the Bill was "at the discretion of the Judge." If "may" was struck out the result would be that, although it might be most expedient to hand a lump sum to the annuitant, the Judge would be compelled to make an order for securing the investment of the amount; and unless there was some good reason for that, we should not agree to the amendment. It was a wise thing to give a discretion to the Court. To make it compulsory in every case seemed to be adopting a procedure which was not necessary.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There could be no hardship in seeing that the terms of a trust were carried out. The object of the Bill was to relieve land of a permanent charge, but not to enable the persons who were to enjoy the benefit of the annuity to be deprived of it. It would be an advantage that the Judge should give specific directions as to how the capital sum was to be invested.

Mr. KEENAN: The subclause prior to the one which had been amended by the amendment would be made contradictory. The import of the Bill was to relieve the land of the annuity, and it would be contradictory to take away from the Court the discretion that was most necessary.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The amendment would limit to some extent the power of the Court as set forth in Subclauses 2 and 3, but it could not be said to contradict those powers. It was a matter of opinion whether it was wise to vary the conditions of the trust. The amendment would ensure the proper investment of the capital sum, and the in-

come of that capital sum which would go to the persons who were entitled to it.

Mr. FOULKES: This was a wise amendemnt; it protected the people in whose favour the annuity had been granted. Supposing the annuity was worth £500 or £1,000, it would be the duty of the Judge to say that the money should be invested and not handed over to the trustees.

Mr. Angwin: Has not the Judge that power now?

Mr. FOULKES: The Judge had a discretionary power. If no application was made to the Judge there might be trustees who would hand the lump sum over to the beneficiaries. The person entitled to the annuity might be a child, and no one might be appointed to look after the child's interests. The amendment would force the Court to see that the money was properly invested for the child.

Mr. George: Where was the money to be invested?

Mr. FOULKES: The Judge would make inquiries as to the best form of investment, and every protection would be given to the beneficiary.

Mr. WALKER: The argument of the member for Claremont would be all very well if we had the machinery set forth in the Bill as to how the Judge was to superintend the investment of the money. The object of protecting the infant, or any beneficiary, was procured by the measure as it stood without the amendment. What more could be required than the provision in Subclause 5? If the Judge was satisfied that the trusts were being properly carried out, he would not make any order, but if the Council's amendment was agreed to the Judge would have to make further directions, although he might be satisfied that the trusts were being properly carried out. In this instance it gave the Judge the power to direct.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: While perhaps the amendment was not one of the highest importance, it would serve the useful function of making assurance doubly sure. It was quite possible that our judges would administer the section

in such a way that it would not be of great importance whether the word were "shall" or "may." But the amendment did not mar the Bill; if anything it improved it, and that being the case, the Committee might very well pass it. If in the amendment there were any danger of hardship being inflicted, he could understand the opposition; but it was a wise principle to follow that when no valid objection could be taken to a suggestion—and when it could be shown that it would make the position somewhat safer than before, then the Committee could with advantage adopt it. It could do no possible harm, while there was a distinct possibility of its doing a certain amount of good.

Mr. HOLMAN: The explanation given by the Attorney General was by no means satisfactory. The Minister had stated that the amendment would not do any harm and that, therefore, hon. members ought to accept it. Surely that was not a sound contention. All the legal members of the Committee had spoken upon the matter, and the Committee were now more confused in respect to it than they had been before hearing these learned gentlemen.

The Attorney General: What is your doubt?

Mr. HOLMAN: The doubt entertained by him had been made perfectly clear when he had interjected that in cases where it was necessary for a judge to issue a direction or to give a decision, "may" meant "shall." In many cases tried in the courts "may" in a section had been interpreted by the judges to mean "shall." The mere statement that the amendment might do good was not sufficient reason why it should be so accepted.

The Attorney General: I say it will do good.

Mr. HOLMAN: Why did not the Attorney General state an imaginary case showing how or where it could do good? He (Mr. Holman) was satisfied that the amendment was not necessary, and he had no legal knowledge at all.

Mr. Collier: That is how you came to arrive at that decision.

Mr. HOLMAN: Until he should hear some satisfactory reason for the adoption of the amendment he would oppose it.

Mr. ANGWIN: Some better reasons than had been heard should be advanced in support of the amendment. From a perusal of the discussion in another place he could find no reason whatever given for the amendment; even the mover had given no reason for it. For his (Mr. Angwin's) part he would oppose the amendment.

Mr. GEORGE: It seemed that there might arise a case in which it was desirable that a property carrying an annuity should be sold and a certain sum of money set apart which would produce the annuity. Having sold the property, the trustees might decide to invest sufficient of the proceeds to provide the annuity; but after the investment was made the value of the securities might fall and on a foreclosure being effected the property might not realise the sum named by the testator as the annuity. The effect of making it mandatory would be that the judge would see that a sufficient sum of money was invested on securities that were not likely to fall. He had come to the conclusion that the amendment was a just and reasonable one; consequently he would support it.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	17

Majority for .. 1

#### AYES.

Mr. Butcher	Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Carson	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Draper	Mr. Osborn
Mr. George	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. J. Price
Mr. Gregory	Mr. F. Wilton
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Hayward	(Teller).
Mr. Mitchell	

#### NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Male
Mr. Bath	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Bolton	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Davies	Mr. Swan
Mr. Holman	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Ware
Mr. Jacoby	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Keenan	(Teller).

Question thus passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Council.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1909-10.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 17th November; Mr. Taylor in the Chair.

Public Works Department (Hon. Frank Wilson, Minister).

Vote—*Public Works and Buildings*, £129,428:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. Frank Wilson): In view of the Chairman of Committee's ruling when the Estimates were previously under discussion I will endeavour to keep my remarks quite within the point, so far as possible, of the figures contained in these Estimates.

Mr. Bath: You have plenty of latitude.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Unfortunately there is not too much latitude, because it is difficult to deal with these figures without reference to past expenditure. That, I understood the other evening from the Chairman of Committees, was out of order.

Mr. Bath: No fear.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am very glad to hear that, for I shall be able to deal with the figures and compare them with the expenditure of the past. It is unnecessary for me to point out to the Committee that the work of this department is merely to control the expenditure in connection with the requirements of the other Government departments from time to time as made by vote of this House; therefore, we have not much initiative, but we have this responsible duty, that not only have we to carry out what votes may be available from Consolidated Revenue, but we also have large sums of money voted from Loan Fund to expend on the public works of this State. I am sure I am voicing the opinion of every member of the House when I say I regret the revenue will not warrant a larger expenditure than is put before members in these Estimates of the Works Department.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If you treated all alike it would do.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member looks through the Estimates he will see that, so far as possible, we have been impartial. Members will also see that an endeavour has been made to compensate to some extent by providing a considerable number of very urgent works from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account. The matter I wish to deal with most particularly in introducing the Works Estimates, is in connection with departmental administration, and in this respect I want to say that I have to congratulate my predecessor upon exercising great care in his administrative expenditure in connection with this department. I find, on making a comparison, that economy has been exercised and that the percentage of salaries to the total expenditure has gradually decreased, and on that score he and the officers of the department are to be commended. It is very difficult to go through a department like the Public Works and point out—even for a Minister who may have been there for a number of years—the individual engineers or assistants who could be done without, or even where economy could be effected in the clerical division. Naturally one has to depend upon the responsible officers and experts in connection with the engineering department, as to whether the staff is overmanned or undermanned; but anyone can compare and get a bird's-eye view of the working by comparing the percentage of salaries with the total cost of the works carried out. This is an ordinary custom in private works. For instance, architects work on a commission basis, and engineers are accustomed, even in private works, to compare their total cost with the administrative expenditure in order to see whether the management has been economical or otherwise. I find, after making a comparison by this means, that the Public Works Department has never been so cheaply administered since the year 1903-4. Of course the total amount expended has a great bearing on the economy that might be effected. For in-

stance, in 1903-4 we expended over one million of money on public works and buildings of every description, and the salaries amounted to £60,681; this gives a percentage of 6.03. I find that in the next year the percentage went up to 7.65, because there had been a considerable shrinkage in the expenditure, which had decreased to £734,000. In the following year the expenditure was still less, the total being £529,000, and the percentage naturally went up too, being 9.28. In 1906-7 the expenditure was increased to £681,000, and the percentage decreased to 7.81. In 1907-8 the expenditure was pretty well the same as in the previous year, but, unfortunately, the expenditure went up slowly to 8.03 per cent. In 1908-9 the total expenditure was £780,000 and the salaries £51,025, the percentage thus having decreased to 6.3 on the works constructed and carried out. That appears to be a most satisfactory position of affairs, and one that shows that the Minister and his officers had a grasp of their department and have been exercising, with the assistance of the efforts put forward by every other Minister, that economy which has resulted in a saving to this extent.

Mr. Bath: Is it not a fact that some work being done by contract would make a difference?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Departmental work costs somewhat more than contract work. It stands to reason that if we have to enter into all the details of the control of departmental construction, have timekeepers and storekeepers, with a staff in the head office organised to purchase and forward supplies, especially where the jobs extend for many hundreds of miles, the expenditure must be somewhat greater for departmentally constructed work than contract.

Mr. Angwin: How is it that you carry out some works cheaper?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: How is it that one contractor will beat another by thousands of pounds in tendering for the same job? When I find that a contractor is asking too much for a work, and the department assure me that they

can construct the work cheaper, I do it departmentally.

Mr. Angwin: Not in every case.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In most cases. That course is always adopted when a work can be constructed cheaper departmentally than by contract. It does not follow that because the price tendered for one job was too high that the next job can be done cheaper departmentally than by contract. That will be found the case in all classes of work that one calls tenders for. Tenderers vary considerably, for one time they want a job badly and cut the price, but on another occasion they are not so particular, and up goes the price. We have had that clearly shown within the last 12 months. There was the case of the Wilgarrup railway, where the price tendered by the contractor was out of all reason, and, in fact, was about 50 per cent. above the departmental figure; consequently we constructed that work departmentally.

Mr. Angwin: What about the Chapman railway?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There was a slight difference there. In connection with the Pilbara railway the difference was nothing worth talking about, and the same with the Meekatharra railway. The department do not undertake these jobs when the price is very similar to that of the contractor, as there is always the chance that it would be found subsequently that the department had under-estimated the cost.

*(Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.)*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When we adjourned for tea I was saying that the Public Works Department had been economically administered during the past twelve months, and I was quoting certain figures in support of my contention. I want to go further and point out that in the architectural and engineering divisions reductions have been made as compared with the total expenditure. In the engineering division last year we spent £567,000 including loan expenditure, and the percentage of salaries was 5.9, as compared with 7.87 in the

previous year and 6.98 in 1906-7. Indeed this appears to have been a record year in that respect. The architectural division for last year was 5.82 as compared with the total expenditure of £153,000. In the previous year it was 4.76 and the expenditure was £197,772; nevertheless I am sorry to say there was an increased expenditure as far as the architectural division was concerned, but as compared with previous years there is still a considerable reduction from 6.94 in 1903-4 to 6.45 in 1904-5 and 5.70, 5.83, and 5.82 in the three following years. In both of these branches, which comprise the two main branches of the Public Works Department, we find that there is evidence of considerable economy. There is one matter I wish particularly to refer to, if I may, and that is the charge made by the Leader of the Opposition when speaking on the Budget in connection with the Works Department, a charge made against myself. He stated that I had made a great point of the adverse criticism with regard to the Labour Government, to the effect that they did not expend the whole of their vote on certain public works, and he went on to say that we were greater sinners in that respect during our term of office, and he was good enough to conclude that he would not complain if we had not the money to spend; but he thought he might fairly ask for a greater degree of accuracy when the Estimates were submitted. I want to set the hon. member right on this point, as we are not as great sinners as our predecessors in that respect, and I want to show that during last year whereas we had a vote of only £173,000 from Consolidated Revenue for works, we expended £151,000 of that, or 87.3 per cent., whereas during the year he was quoting for purposes of comparison the vote was £387,000 and the expenditure £337,000, or 87.2 per cent. So that we were a decimal point ahead of the year the hon. member used for comparison. There is another way of looking at this matter, and that is that the revenue was over-estimated to a greater degree in the latter year than in the year with which the hon. member compared us. For in-

stance, last year our estimated total revenue was £3,370,000 and we received £3,267,000, or we had an over-estimate of £123,000, equal to £3 12s. 10d. per cent.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister is proceeding outside the Works Estimates now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I just wanted to show that the charge of extravagance made by the hon. member cannot be substantiated.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister can discuss the division and that only.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Keep within the division?

Mr. BATH: It will not be possible to discuss the administration of the Works Department on these Estimates if the scope of the discussion is to be limited.

The CHAIRMAN: The general discussion is closed, and the hon. member must confine himself to the division, and the remarks must be relevant to that division.

Mr. BATH: The point I am taking is that the Minister is now discussing his division. Is it not possible to discuss his administration in that division?

The CHAIRMAN: It is only possible to discuss the Minister's administration as far as it is relevant to the division of the Estimates in consideration by the Committee.

Mr. GEORGE: In connection with your ruling, and the ruling which you gave in the previous week, is it your view still that although there may be items in connection with this particular part of the Estimates that we are discussing in which it may be necessary to refer to other divisions, that we will be precluded from doing so? If that is so, the effect will be that instead of having the Estimates introduced and one speech made afterwards, you will have every member of the House speaking according to his physical strength and discussing the whole of the items from cover to cover. In olden times we were allowed to speak generally on each division and then discuss item by item afterwards. I think that is the procedure that should be adopted by the present Committee.

Mr. BATH: The point I wish to illustrate is this. The Minister for Works is now dealing with his Estimates which practically cover every branch of his department. During the past twelve months there may have been matters occurring in the administration of that department to which hon. members may wish to refer, matters involving expenditure of money, and it might be desired to question the administration of the Minister, and the administration of his officers whose votes appear on these Estimates. Will hon. members be debarred from dealing with that administrative work?

The CHAIRMAN: I can only rule that the question under consideration by the Committee is, "Works and Buildings, £129,428." The only question that can be discussed is either that Division or a part of that Division. Discussion can be allowed only on that Division, and nothing outside that can be discussed. In giving this ruling I may say that I have been very careful in looking up the procedure of the House of Commons and the procedure of other Parliaments, and while I am anxious to give the Committee the fullest latitude I can, find nothing that gives me the right to allow members to go outside what I have stated, or to talk irrelevantly on a particular question.

Mr. GEORGE: With all due respect may I be allowed to say that there are various things in these Estimates, for instance there is an item which deals with an increase in salaries and in connection with that increase it may be necessary to refer, we will say, to the Public Service Act which has also been comprised in the previous division; would I be in order in referring to that, or would I be out of order?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member would certainly be in order in illustrating an argument with any reference that may be necessary and justified in that illustration. He would not be in order in starting a general discussion on increases of salary.

Mr. BATH: We have here an item providing for water supply and sewerage; the Minister for Works administers that department and under your ruling

will hon. members be debarred from entering into a general discussion on the administration of the water supply and sewerage branch of the Public Works Department?

The CHAIRMAN: Undoubtedly; because that department is provided for on the Loan Estimates. On the Loan Estimates, the hon. member will be quite in order in discussing it.

Mr. BATH: It is provided for on these Estimates too.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will be quite in order in discussing all the items of the sub-division, "Water Supply and Sewerage, £5,668," but in discussing, say, the metropolitan water-works and sewerage, he must deal with that on the Loan Estimates, which I assume will be brought before the Committee at a later date.

*Dissent from Chairman's ruling.*

Mr. BATH: I regret, Mr. Chairman, that I must dissent from your ruling in this matter. I do so for the reason that if hon. members are debarred from discussing the administration of the Works Department there will be no other opportunity to do so during the present session, and therefore the administration of the department must go entirely without discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to say that my ruling is based on *May*, 11th edition, page 619, where it is written—

"In accordance with general usage the main principle which governs debate in the Committee of Supply is relevancy with the matter which the question proposed from the Chair submits to the Committee.

And, further, on page 620—

"No method has been established for obtaining in the Committee a general discussion upon the administration of the expenditure sanctioned by the Civil Service Estimates; and debate must be kept to the specific object of the grant which is placed before the Committee. For instance, the grant for the salary of the Chief Secretary for Ireland does not justify a review of his conduct regarding prosecutions—a subject which is relevant to the grant for public

prosecutions. Criticisms made on the grant for prisons upon the enforcement of the officials of the prison rules, was permitted, but not of the conditions imposed by those rules from a legislative point of view; nor can the circumstances attending the trial which resulted in sending prisoners to gaol be discussed on the prisons' vote."

Now the Standing Orders under which we are working provide that in all cases not provided for hereinafter or by sessional or other orders resort shall be had to the rules, forms, and practice of the Commons House of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, which shall be followed as far as they can be applied to the proceedings of this House. In regard to the procedure in Committee of Supply there are no specific Standing Orders within the Standing Orders adopted by our House. Therefore, I am compelled to resort to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, and I have quoted from *May* in regard to the effect of those Standing Orders.

Mr. GEORGE: I would like to point out—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss a question of procedure in Committee.

Mr. GEORGE: I was not going to discuss it, I was about to submit something—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot do so. The Leader of the Opposition has handed to me the following written objection to my ruling:—

"I dissent from the Chairman's ruling on the grounds that if members are not permitted to discuss the administrative work of the Minister for Works and his officers on the general discussion of the Works Estimates, no other opportunity will be afforded to hon. members.

The SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: I have to report that in accordance with the procedure I have given a ruling that the remarks of hon. members in regard to the Estimates must be relevant to the division under discussion. The Leader of the Opposition has moved to dissent from the ruling on the grounds that if the administrative

work of the Minister and his officers are not discussed on the Estimates no other opportunity will be afforded to hon. members for such discussion. I have admitted that the hon. member has a right to discuss this so long as it is relevant to the vote.

Mr. BATH: I desire to make the point clearer than perhaps it has been made, by stating that the Minister for Works was discussing the economy exercised by him in regard to the cost of the administration of his department—a discussion which I considered entirely germane to this division under discussion. However, the Chairman ruled him out of order, and I have taken exception to that ruling on the grounds that there is nothing more applicable to this division of the Estimates than the administration of the Minister for Works and those officers whom he controls. In support of that I would read an opinion from the *House of Commons Procedure* by George Walpole, the preface of which was written in 1901, in regard to the discussion of the old right, that is, the assertion of the old constitutional doctrine of grievances before supply, which has been a time-honoured right not only in the House of Commons but in those other Parliaments based on the British House of Commons. The opinion reads as follows:—

“Broadly, supply alone affords private members that right of criticism, that constant power of demanding from the Government explanations of their administrative and executive action which, without supply, can never be possessed. . . . Supply is an open platform on which every private member can lay his views, not on abstract and academic questions, but on the concrete facts of daily administration. . . . Supply does not exist for the purpose of enforcing economy on the Government; it does exist for the purpose of criticising the policy of the Government, of controlling their administration, and bringing them to book for their policy at home and abroad.”

That seems to me a sound assertion of the rights of hon. members to ventilate grievances and criticise administration

under that time-honoured privilege enjoyed by the House of Commons. I submit, however, that if we were denied this opportunity, I do not know any other opportunity which hon. members would have of freely criticising the administration of Ministers. We might table motions, it is true, but when would we have an opportunity of reaching them? One might move the adjournment of the House, but that might mean the use of every sitting day for the purpose. And in view of the practice hitherto followed in this House, and the assertion of right always enjoyed in the British House of Commons, I submit that the Chairman in limiting the Minister's right to speak on this question is also limiting the right of hon. members, and that, therefore, his ruling is incorrect.

Mr. WALKER: I understand that the Chairman ruled the Minister for Works out of order on the score that what was being said was not germane or relevant to the vote; and in giving that ruling the Chairman cited *May* as to relevancy. The point does not involve the question of relevancy, or rather it is too trite to say that relevancy is one of the essential features of all questions of debate. But I wish to draw your attention to the item we are discussing, which is headed “Minister for Works, Public Works and Buildings, £129,428.” Now upon that subject everything connected with works, whether it be their origin, their progress, their cost, their excellence, their defects, or any other quality connected with works and buildings, is relevant. The estimates are put in this form for that purpose. We have, first, this page 37. Here we have a summary, so to speak, of the whole of the matters connected with the department, which includes votes, expenditure and estimates; and everything upon this page is absolutely relevant to the discussion of the Works Estimates. Consequently, to pull one up at a moment's notice and to say that criticism upon administration is not relevant is, to my way of thinking, an absurd position to take up. It is all a matter of relevancy. The point has been made that when we



have not definitely provided by our Standing Orders for the course we should take in our proceedings in this Chamber we shall have reference to the rules, forms, and practices of the House of Commons. There is to that a wise qualification which says, "As far as they can be applied to the proceedings of this House." Now you are aware that in England all these matters are referred to different Standing Committees. Here in our Parliament, we have only one Committee to which we refer these supplies; that is, we go into Committee of the whole House. There are certain regulations which limit the powers of these Standing Committees of the House of Commons which would not at all apply to our Committee of the whole House. Therefore, we cannot apply on all fours the practice and procedure of the British House of Commons, which is, in this respect, differently constituted from our own. The main point you have to decide is that of relevancy, and I ask you if it has not been, not only the custom but the absolute right, of members always to listen to an explanatory speech dealing with the administration of the department of the particular Minister who is in charge of that branch of the Estimates? The Minister for Works, for instance, deals with all matters in his preliminary speech explanatory of the works carried out for the past twelve months, and explanatory of the effect the estimates of his department are going to have on the country, and meeting difficulties and explaining obscurities. It has been the course invariably, and it is a very necessary course and one perfectly relevant to the vote on page 37 of the Estimates, and what the Minister can explain and what he can amplify and make clear and defend others are equally open to criticism. So this sudden innovation upon the practice of this House and of other Australian Legislative Assemblies since we have had Constitutional Government in Australia is, to put it very gently, of a startling character. It is making Parliament over again, and unnecessarily so, because the course that was being taken by the Minister for Works is not

prohibited by any Standing Order of our own or by any practice of the British House of Commons.

Mr. FOULKES: I have only risen to remind you, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that for many years it has been the practice for members to have the full liberty of a general discussion in connection with each branch of these Estimates, and I may remind you also of the fact that when the Budget was introduced many members announced that they refrained from speaking on any subject that would be likely to form part of the Estimates, because they proposed deferring their remarks until the particular Estimates were before the Committee. I remember that the member for Guildford in speaking this session on the Budget dealt with the question of hospitals and said there were many other subjects he would like to have discussed which he would have the full opportunity of discussing when the Estimates were brought forward.

The Premier: He did not speak on the general Estimates.

Mr. FOULKES: At any rate when he spoke on the hospital question he said he would refer to the subject when it came on on the Estimates. I would also remind you, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that in the British House of Commons—I have often read the debates in connection with it—it has been the frequent practice for many years past for members to move to reduce the vote of Under Secretary for Ireland for the purpose of calling attention to the administration of public affairs in Ireland by the Government that happened to be in office, showing conclusively that members had full opportunity in the British House of having a full discussion on all public affairs in connection with the Estimates. It came as a great surprise I am quite sure, to hon. members to find that they were expected to confine their remarks to some details as to whether a certain civil servant should receive a certain amount of salary, and yet be prevented from discussing the work that particular civil servant was expected to carry out.

Mr. JACOBY: The custom of discussing generally the items affecting a department at the beginning of the discussion of that department has been followed by this House, but the practice has to some extent been wrong inasmuch as in the matter of Supply the discussion on grievances should take place while the Speaker is in the Chair on the motion "that the Speaker do leave the Chair for the purpose of going into Committee of Supply." That is the practice of the House of Commons, and it is because of not following that practice that we are in our present difficulty; but if an alteration of our custom is to be made I think it would be wise that notice should be given at the beginning of the session that there is to be an alteration of the practice, and that we should revert to the House of Commons' practice. The proper time to discuss grievances is while the Speaker is in the Chair, and grievances before Supply are raised while the Speaker is in the Chair. I submit we should not depart from our own custom without full notice being given early in the session before the Estimates come on so that members should have full opportunity of knowing the particular time when to discuss these grievances. Under that practice once we got into Committee then the item under discussion can only be referred to directly, and principles cannot be raised under it.

Mr. GEORGE: Although we have the greatest respect perhaps for the House of Commons, and also for *May* and those exponents of the British practice, a custom has grown up in Western Australia since Responsible Government in the discussion of these Estimates, and that is, while at the introduction of the Budget members can speak generally all through the whole of the Estimates, and if necessary can attack the administration of the Government taking it practically as a vote of no-confidence, they may pass it, as they did this year, with simply two speeches with the full knowledge that the custom of this House is that when each department is reached it will be possible for matters

relating to that department to be discussed. That has been the custom, and every independent member of Parliament irrespective of party should feel he should support it as strongly as he possibly can.

Mr. Hudson: The custom has become the law.

Mr. GEORGE: If the principle of discussing the division is not to be allowed, when on earth are we going to get through the Estimates? Next year? Anyone could take these 30, 40, or 50 pages of the Estimates and start out on a speech for six hours, or as long as he is physically able to stand up, and it would take another year, and another lot of Estimates will be before us, before we could finish the discussion. I submit for the convenience of the House, for the benefit of the country, and for the shortening of debates, that the old custom which has been allowed since the inception of Responsible Government should not be broken.

Mr. SPEAKER: The point I have to decide is as to whether the Chairman of Committees is right or wrong, and according to the procedure he has quoted I cannot do other than say I confirm his ruling, though I confess—and I believe I am right in saying I am the oldest member in this Parliament of Western Australia—it has been the practice, as has been pointed out by the members for Kanowna and Murray, ever since Responsible Government was established in Western Australia. However, I can only confirm the ruling of the Chairman of Committees; but I hope as hon. members expressed at the beginning of the session their intention to deal with the various divisions of the Estimates, that the Chairman of Committees may, seeing the feeling of the House, give a little latitude. I can do nothing more than say the Chairman's ruling is correct according to the authority of *May*.

#### *Dissent from Speaker's Ruling.*

Mr. BATH: I do not think it would be in the interests of members for the opportunity to discuss these matters to be an act of grace. I think it should be

entirely a matter of right. This question is of such great importance that I can do no other than dissent from the ruling, and I respectfully submit that the opinion I quoted as to the rules and procedure of the House of Commons conveys an altogether different impression from that of the Chairman of Committees and yourself. It does not say we are to accept even *May's* interpretation of the Standing Orders as the right one. Another authority may be equally as good, and equally as sound, and on these grounds it is my intention to move to dissent from your ruling.

Mr. WALKER: I second that.

The PREMIER: I think the matter complained of by the member for Kanowna was a question whether the speech of the Minister for Works was relevant to the matter or not. Apparently in the opinion of the Chairman of Committees, in instituting a comparison between the percentage cost of administration in previous years and that of this year, the Minister was going outside the proper practice. We all recognise it has been the custom—at least since the last five or six years. I do not think that prior to Federation it was the custom.

Mr. George: It has been the practice ever since Responsible Government.

The PREMIER: I understood that the present Minister for Mines was the one who instituted the custom by making an opening speech in connection with the Mines Estimates. In referring to the House of Commons practice, I believe the whole discussion is when the Budget is introduced, with the exception that when the Army and Navy Estimates are dealt with then the whole question of the army and navy is dealt with. It seems to me the matter is one which is very much at the option of the Chairman as to whether the speaker is relevant or not. I cannot see there is anything to object to in the Chairman's ruling as to a point of relevancy.

Mr. BATH: The point I am taking is that the discussion of the administration of the Minister, even if it be a comparison with previous years in order to show economy in the present year, as was

sought to be done by the Minister, is entirely relevant. I do not know anything that can be more relevant to the Works Estimates we are discussing; and that is the basis of my dissent. When the Minister for Works was pulled up he was making a comparison of the cost of spending money on the Works Department, that is the percentage it took in administration as compared with previous years, to show economy had been effected by his predecessor.

The Minister for Works: I did not make that comparison at the time. I was comparing the total expenditure of the department with the total revenue received.

Mr. BATH: It amounts to the same thing. The Minister was making a comparison to present his administration more favourably than that of previous years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Perhaps it will assist Mr. Speaker if I explain exactly what I was discussing when called to order. The Leader of the Opposition, in speaking on the Budget five or six weeks ago, charged me especially with the fact that I made a great point of adverse criticism on the then Government in connection with the amount expended from Consolidated Revenue during the year 1904-5. That is, he said that I found fault with the Labour Government at that time, in that they did not expend all the money voted, and he said he would ask for a greater degree of accuracy in the matter. I was showing that the total amount expended by the Works Department in proportion to the total revenue derived was just as great last year, if not greater, than in 1904-5. I am giving this information so that Mr. Speaker might know upon what the Chairman called me to order. I was following the custom established during the past five or six years, that is to discuss practically anything in connection with the Works Department, and I was answering a charge which I thought the leader of the Opposition had made against the Works Department and against me when he spoke on the Budget. I may have been irrelevant in going so

far back but I did not intend to be, I was trying to keep within the four corners of the Estimates at the time, and I submit it is a question for you to say whether I was irrelevant or otherwise.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not the case put by the Chairman of Committees. He made a statement which is different from the motion of the member for Brown Hill. That written motion is as follows:—

"I dissent from the Chairman's ruling on the ground that if members are not permitted to discuss the administrative work of the Minister for Works and his officers on the general discussion of Works Estimates, no other opportunity will be afforded to members."

Mr. BATH: For your information I may say that on two or three separate occasions after the Chairman gave his ruling I asked for an opinion on that very point, and it was only when no satisfaction was given on that point that I dissented from his ruling.

Mr. SPEAKER: The whole question is whether we should follow the old procedure of years back or adopt a new method. I have held that the new practice is correct so far as the authorities are concerned. I have expressed my own feelings on the old custom to the effect that it is preferable, but I am bound by the authorities in deciding whether the Chairman is right or wrong.

Mr. KEENAN: It appears that there is some confusion as to what the ruling of the Chairman was. The Minister points out what he was engaged in saying at the time he was stopped, which was that he was making a comparison between the revenue and expenditure in the last financial year and the revenue and expenditure in the previous financial year, and Mr. Speaker now informs the House that his ruling was on a totally different point, that is; as to whether the range of discussion should cover all questions arising from the administration of the vote, or be confined to the limits of the supposed ruling of the Chairman. Even on the wider question of whether we should follow our own custom or be bound by authorities, I emphatically say that we are bound, unless the House rules

otherwise and expresses an opinion by resolution, to follow our own custom. We are a sovereign assembly, absolutely entitled to determine the limitations of our own discussions. We are entitled by the custom we have established to indicate to all who follow us the lines on which they shall discuss the various matters to be determined here, and no rules, no written rules, can have greater authority than established custom. When it is suggested that the custom, or practice, or written rule, in vogue elsewhere is to override our own usage, it is suggesting something derogatory to our own dignity. If unfortunately it has to come to the vote as to whether your ruling is to be dissented from or not, I shall be reluctantly compelled to vote against it. I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will understand that in taking that course I shall do so with no intention of showing one atom of disrespect, with no intention to in any way challenge your judgment, but only with the intention to preserve the rights and liberties of this House, especially on a question on which you have expressed the gravest doubt as to whether your ruling should be given effect to or not.

Mr. SPEAKER: With the intention of making it quite clear, I shall again read the written motion of dissent. It is as follows:—

"I dissent from the Chairman's ruling on the ground that if members are not permitted to discuss the administrative work of the Minister for Works and his officers on the general discussion of Works Estimates, no other opportunity will be afforded to members." Motion (dissent) put and passed.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no other construction to be placed upon the decision of the House than that my ruling is disagreed with, and that the old custom is agreed to. I have endeavoured to show members my feelings on the matter, but I was bound to follow the rule as I have explained it.

*Committee resumed.*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the figures which I was quoting when the question of the Chair-

man's ruling was brought up. I was referring to the charge made by the leader of the Opposition when speaking on the Budget that the present Administration were greater sinners in respect to expenditure of the Public Works Department than the Administration of 1904-5.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow reference to that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, I will leave that subject and will try and confine myself to the items on the Estimates. I would like to point out to the Committee that the total expenditure provided for the Works Department on these Estimates is £20,000 in round figures, less than the actual expenditure for the year just ended.

Mr. George: How do you account for that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member listens for a few moments I will explain that. The decreases are in the following items:—salaries, £1,246; incidental vote, £2,241; annual grant in connection with roads boards, nearly £5,000; special grants for new works, nearly £3,000; water supply and drainage, £3,822; public schools—an item I will touch on later—£6,632; other buildings, £6,389. On the other hand it is provided that there shall be slight increases as follow:—bridges, £1,087; harbours and rivers, £5,683; miscellaneous, £852. With regard to decreases first. As members will see the salaries are pretty well equal to the previous year, but there is an adjustment between revenue expenditure and loan or from the property trust account which accounts for a small decrease in that direction. The incidental vote is decreased by transferring the expenditure in connection with the cleaning of the different offices to the Colonial Secretary's Department. There is also an anticipated decrease in the amounts we shall have to pay for office and other rents. Of course members will see that there is a decrease, to some extent, in the grants given annually for maintenance purposes to roads boards. As against that I might mention that there will be considerable expenditure, very much larger than has been the case heretofore, from loan votes. The amounts

are being allotted, and these will far more than make up for the decrease in the grant on the general vote. It will be noticed that the revotes for the main roads have been reduced as promised to Parliament last year by my predecessor. They have been reduced, in round figures by one-third. As to water supply and drainage, the decrease under this heading on this year's proposed expenditure is due to the transfer of the Fremantle and Claremont water supplies to the control of the Metropolitan Sewerage and Water Supply Board. With regard to the item, "Public schools," members will at once say that they regret to see a reduction of £6,000. The total expenditure on schools however will be considerably more this year than last because on the Property Trust Account we have this year provided £16,786, being an increase of £10,399 over and above last year's expenditure. Recognising as we do the necessity for providing school buildings wherever it is possible with the funds at our command, more especially in the large agricultural centres that we have rapidly established owing to the carrying out of the developmental policy and extension of agricultural railways, recognising all this, and that education is of primary importance to those who are settling on the land with their young families, we have made provision this year to expend £30,044 on school buildings as against last year's total expenditure of £26,278. The increases comprise principally, as I have stated, £1,087, accounted for by revotes for certain works which either were too late to be constructed last year, or owing to financial stringency had to stand over. These have been revoted this year. On the Property Trust Account Estimates there is also a sum of £3,000 more than was provided last year for construction of bridges. The increase under the heading of "Miscellaneous" of £852 referred to by me a short time since, is to provide, and is exclusively covered by the item of £1,000, to pay for running traffic on railways being constructed departmentally, during the time they are under construction. In this respect I expect we shall derive a revenue of at least £2,000 from the carrying of that traffic.

With regard to salaries I might, without mentioning the figures again, point out that whereas the number of permanent officers in connection with the Public Works Department on the 20th June, 1908, was 175, the total number on 30th June, 1909, had been reduced to 149, showing a decrease of 26, and, of course, a corresponding reduction in salaries. It is necessary, however, to say that out of the 26 officers there are 13 who were attached to the stores branch, which has been transferred to the Treasury. Although there was a corresponding reduction of £5,385 in the salaries to cover these 26 officers, and 13 officers have been transferred with the stores branch, amounting approximately to £3,000 per annum, there is, on the other hand, an extra expenditure incurred in connection with temporary assistance, amounting to £2,003, necessitated by the pushing on of public works, principally in the Engineering Department, such as the construction of railways, and the carrying out expeditiously of the sewerage works in the metropolitan area. The total expenditure of the last financial year for the works carried out by this department, exclusive of salaries, was £780,000 in round figures, and the total for salaries was £51,000. The percentages have already been given to the Committee, but I might say that the last financial year showed a percentage reduction of salaries, compared with expenditure, of 1.12, which was lower than that of any of the last five years. That is a satisfactory result. There is a small increase in salaries of £888 over last year, which is accounted for by bringing the salaries of officers up to the minimum of their classification. The incidental vote, as I explained, is reduced. The cleaners and labourers employed have been transferred, of course, that has resulted in certain economies. The item is only £1,600 this year as against an actual expenditure last year of £3,310. With regard to the question of the main vote on the roads board division, that is, the amounts which are given to the different roads boards of the State, my predecessor had under consideration during the course of last year, the doing away of

special grants altogether and confining the assistance to roads boards to the annual subsidies. I have also followed on that line of thought, but I came to the conclusion that we could not very well do away with all special grants, but that we were entitled to have some better assistance in connection with these special grants; I mean better assistance in the way of deciding urgent works and which it would be most advisable to carry out in the interests of the people generally. I have, therefore, as hon. members will see, provided on these Estimates that the amount for new works under roads, shall be a lump sum of £10,500, but I have allocated to the best of the department's ability that £10,500 on certain urgent works to be constructed on the pound for pound principle. In the past these requests for special grants have been put forward, I am bound to say, in a very haphazard way. Amounts were asked for, in many instances, I believe, although I may be wrong in this, in the forlorn hope that they would be granted, not so much because the works, for which the votes were required, were urgent, but it was thought by the roads boards concerned that they might be able to get an additional special grant if they only put in requests for a sufficient number of works, and I might say also that the amounts that the Minister for Works has been able to allocate have been absolutely too small for the object for which they were required in nearly all cases. It is very seldom he has had funds at his disposal to enable him to grant fair amounts for the works to be done, and requested to be carried out, and in his anxiety, and he is to be commended for being impartial—I found the same trouble when I was previously in the Works Department—he found that it was necessary to cut down the items which, perhaps, required hundreds of pounds, and we had to give fifties, which, it seemed to me, were only drops in the bucket.

Mr. Bolton: Better than a dry bucket.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It would be better to have one bucket full than half a dozen buckets only one-sixth

full. I want to put this point before the Committee. We have a proposition to vote £10,500, and we propose that this shall be allocated according to the schedule printed, and that the roads boards will spend pound for pound, which will mean that we will get an expenditure of £21,000, and thus ensure a reasonable sum of money being spent on the roads board works. It also provided that the items may be varied as the exigencies of the work may warrant; that is to say, if a roads board declares that one of the items is not urgent it will be within the power of the Minister, after conference with the roads board, to re-allocate the amount to such other item that may be regarded as being more urgent. I maintain we shall thus throw the responsibility on to the roads boards. It will make them more self-reliant, and this procedure will be of more assistance to the officers of the Works Department, who will be able to see that only the most urgent works are put in hand. I think I have already traversed all the main items comprised in these Estimates. Let me again say that I regret that we have not an overflowing treasury, which will provide the Works Department with £500,000 at least, instead of £130,000, but we have to obey orders and cut our coat according to our cloth. If the money is not there, as the leader of the Opposition fairly pointed out, we cannot be expected to spend it. Our one idea is to administer our department economically, and see that we get the best results out of the money that is provided.

Mr. BATH: The comparison that the Minister for Works sought to make in order to show that the department has been administered economically is not, after all, a very reliable guide, because, as I pointed out by interjection, if a number of contracts for big works are let during the year, then, naturally, the administrative cost, as shown on the Estimates, should be reduced, because it should not require as large a staff to supervise the contractors carrying out the work and involving a large expenditure of money as it should for officers to immediately supervise the work which they

are carrying out themselves. One would expect that more officers would be required for works undertaken by day labour than if the contractors carried them out, although I know that contractors require a good deal of looking after, and even with all the superintendence and supervision they get they sometimes manage to get ahead of the department. But the chief officers were shown on the salaries of the administrative staff, and on that ground the comparison was not a very reliable one. Then again, one could not expect that the cost of administration was going to increase proportionately with the increase in expenditure on works. For instance, if it took 3s. in the pound to supervise works involving an expenditure of half a million, it should not require 6s. in the pound to supervise works involving an expenditure of one million.

The Minister for Works: Of course the percentage would not be doubled.

Mr. BATH: Yet the Minister had tried to make out that because a larger expenditure was being made on certain works the increase in supervision, though not in the same proportion, would be large. Another point which had been referred to in previous discussions on the Estimates was the tendency to allocate a considerable proportion of the vote for salaries to the Loan Estimates, with, presumably, the purpose of showing a saving in the administration of revenue, so far as the Works Department was concerned. Thus there was shown a paper saving of expenditure on administration, so far as the revenue estimates were concerned, which, however, was no saving, but only a mere juggling with figures.

The Minister for Works: No; the expenditure is £20,000 less.

Mr. BATH: It was mere juggling.

The Minister for Works: That is unfair; why did not you make a charge?

Mr. BATH: When the Minister desired to show a statement he merely said, "We will transfer a little more to loan expenditure."

The Minister for Works: No, you know that is not so.

Mr. BATH: All that honourable members could do was to take the figures as they found them. The Minister would see that the total provided for salaries, clerical and general, was £51,923, as compared with an actual expenditure of £51,035 for last year. There was an increase of nearly £900 in the allocation of the amount which should be provided on the loan estimates. Whereas the amount provided on the loan estimates had been fixed at £41,913 last year, this year it was set down at £42,600, showing the total revenue vote for salaries as being £9,323 as compared with £9,822. Would the Minister try to argue that the cost of administering the revenue vote had decreased to that extent?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. BATH: Then the Minister would be trying to make honourable members believe something which would be found to be very difficult of belief. It was not a very desirable method of finance; it was that kind of finance which was responsible for the fact that year by year we were able to find less and less money for expenditure on works.

The Minister for Works: It is exactly what you did in 1904-5.

Mr. BATH: The Minister was providing in salaries a very largely decreased amount for roads and bridges, and for the upkeep of public buildings, but outside that no provision was being made for public works. A comparison with the previous Estimates would show that we had nearly reached the position of bed-rock, where our consolidated revenue was required for the payment of interest and sinking fund on our loans and the ordinary cost of administration of the various departments. That was a limit which allowed very little margin for times of depression, when Ministers had to resort to all kinds of pretexts to try and square the balance sheet. It was a serious position when our consolidated revenue was only sufficient to provide for these amounts. With the expenditure of loan money during the past two or three years, and the fact that one would have to pay sinking fund after a period of four years had expired, it would mean that in future

we could only look for a considerable increase in expenditure on interest and sinking fund: and if we had not a corresponding increase in the consolidated revenue then we would be faced with a very serious position indeed. In a few years, perhaps, the revenue would not be sufficient to find even the cost of administration. Under those circumstances it would be seen that the position of the Works Estimates this year was by no means a satisfactory one. Compared with years in which we had been able to provide money from revenue for expenditure on actual works, it showed that our financial position was seriously affecting the Works Department. The Minister had referred to the way in which the decreased vote for roads and bridges was allocated this year, and had said the allocation had been made on the basis of pound for pound to be provided by the local governing body. But he (Mr. Bath) would draw the Minister's attention to a distinct promise which had been made, namely, that the vote for the maintenance of public roads was to be decreased in a certain proportion of 30 per cent. each year. That had not been done.

The Minister for Works: Yes it has. There is an apparent discrepancy but it can be explained.

Mr. BATH: It might have been done in the case of some roads.

The Minister for Works: In the case of all.

Mr. BATH: Not in the case of the Perth-Fremantle road.

The Minister for Works: Yes it has. The amount shown is a portion not paid last year: it has been done.

Mr. BATH: These main roads should have been made to feel the economy to a greater extent than the roads in the country districts, whether mineral or agricultural. Notwithstanding the difficulties which had faced the Treasurer in regard to the allocation of revenue, the money provided for these roads should not have been decreased: it was just as important that we should make roads for country districts as that we should give them railways. Those settlers distant from the railway had to depend on their



roads, and many of them had very great difficulties to contend with in getting their produce to the railway station. During the past winter they had been very seriously handicapped in this respect. Not only should we maintain the vote for the assistance of roads boards at the amount shown for previous years, but we should also have a block vote for the assistance of roads generally throughout the State. There were other matters to which he would refer when the items were under discussion, but for the present he would content himself with saying that the practice of using the Sale of Government Property Trust Account as a means of making up the deficiency in expenditure from the Works Department was not a desirable one. If this vote were to be expended in that direction he was pleased to see that it was being expended in buildings of the character of the technical school and the secondary school; but the practice was undesirable and he hoped the time would come when we would be able to do as the Auditor General had forecasted in one of his reports, namely, to utilise this fund as a supplementary sinking fund rather than in the manner in which the Minister for Works was utilising it at the present time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Had the leader of the Opposition thoroughly understood all the points touched upon in his speech he would not have been so severe in his criticism. He had referred to the paying of salaries from loan fund; that was a well established practice recognised by the department from year to year. It simply meant that if, for instance, there was a thousand pounds to be paid in salaries, and in any given year there was £800 worth in respect of loan works and £200 worth in respect of revenue works, £800 worth of salaries would be charged to loan and £200 worth to revenue. The amount transferred to Loan Account was dependent on the amount spent under loan expenditure. Whether it was taken from loan or from revenue there was a certain amount of supervision necessary, and it was just as great whether the expenditure was from rev-

enue or from loan. There was nothing improper in the practice. The Government of which the honourable member had been a member had followed the same principle. It was a business principle followed all over the world.

Mr. Bath: Who decides whether the works shall be done out of loan or revenue?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Minister made this decision and looked to Parliament to endorse it. However, that did not affect the question; the honourable member had talked as though it were a piece of financial juggling, of which any Government should be ashamed. As a matter of fact it was an altogether proper and correct procedure, and if it were not followed it would mean improper book-keeping. Referring to the question of percentage of salaries to works carried out, he quite recognised it was not an infallible guide and that it would naturally follow that the more works done the lower would be the cost of administration; but during the past year, largely owing to the efforts of the officers, real and effective economies had been made in the Works Department, and at all events last year the percentage of salaries to work carried out was extremely low, and the result entirely satisfactory.

Mr. Johnson: You exceeded your vote.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But more works were got through. With reference also to the vote for roads, there had been under consideration the question of doing away with special grants, a very desirable procedure from many points. However, the method adopted by the Minister should commend itself to members. It was extremely difficult to get information in regard to the various requests put forward. It was almost impossible to ascertain whether a work was urgent or necessary. By adopting the principle of only providing, say, £100, if a local authority was prepared to provide a similar amount, there was a fair guarantee that the work was necessary and of an urgent character.

Mr. JACOBY disagreed with the policy of the Government in the method of

handling the roads vote. No general public work could do so much to assist development as building roads; but while our needs increased a hundredfold in this regard, the department was stringently cutting down the vote. Last year the vote for country roads was £56,000, while municipalities got £8,000 of it from the department, showing the poor position the country authorities were in as compared with the municipalities. The Government should recognise the importance of largely increasing the roads vote. The amount on the Estimates was not sufficient for the needs of the country. It was no use building railways here and there unless conveniences were given to the people to get their stuff to the railways. Five years ago the amount available for roads boards was much greater than what was now available though settlement was probably twice as great. The Government should take into consideration the question of pursuing a bold policy in regard to roads. Their policy of building agricultural railway lines should be also pursued in regard to roads. There was about £25,000 on the last Loan Estimates where £100,000 would be little enough. It was a most vital question in regard to the development of the agricultural industry. It was a matter for regret the report of the Public Works Department was not available. Members were in the dark in regard to various matters in connection with these Estimates owing to the absence of this report.

Mr. FOULKES: It was a matter for regret it was necessary for four-fifths of the administrative expenses of the Works Department to be met out of loan funds. It was an enormous proportion, and no doubt the Minister recognised it. No doubt the Minister would also be pleased to adopt the bold policy recommended by the member for Swan provided there was the cash available. A sum of £11,000 was put down on the Estimates for temporary assistance. There was an enormous number of civil servants on the temporary staff appointed by Ministers. The Government should allow the Public Service Commissioner to appoint these officers. It would be an immense relief

to the Ministers to be relieved from political patronage of the kind.

Mr. Horan: Do you know of a single instance?

Mr. FOULKES: There were many cases. There was not so much care devoted to the selection of temporary officers as to the selection of civil servants put on the permanent staff.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not discuss that on the Public Works Estimates.

Mr. FOULKES: Provision was also made in connection with the minimum increases. It was hardly necessary to remind the Minister that there were other claims made by officers of the Works Department for increases as allowed by the Public Service Commissioner. It was a burning question among a great number of civil servants, and they were crying out for justice to be done under the regulations of the Public Service Commissioner, and under the classification made by him. No doubt many agricultural districts could do with provision for the construction of roads. When Sir John Forrest was Premier, in nearly every Loan Bill for the construction of railways there was also provision made for the construction of roads under the term of "approaches to railway stations." For all practical purposes there were roads running, in some cases, out 10 or 20 miles. It was to be hoped on the Loan Estimates the Minister for Works would make a similar provision.

Mr. JOHNSON: Last year the Government submitted Estimates of proposed expenditure of £171,000. They proposed to expend in salaries to carry out these works a certain sum of money. Now according to the Estimates before us we found the Government exceeded the amount they proposed to expend in salaries, and did not expend the full amount they were authorised by Parliament to expend on works. This called for criticism from members especially in regard to the want of economic administration on the part of the present Minister for Works and his predecessor. It was no use arguing that expenditure on works could be reduced while the same salary

vote was maintained, and that the department was economising. If year after year the works votes were to be reduced the Minister was expected to make a corresponding reduction in the amount of salaries for the officers carrying out the reduced works. The member for Fremantle pointed out that a certain percentage of money was spent in salaries on works carried out from loan funds, and that it was a fair percentage; but not having the Loan Estimates before them, members could not see whether the full expenditure from loan funds had been carried out. Members knew from the Estimates before them that the salaries votes, both loan and revenue, had been exceeded, and as the expenditure from revenue on works was less than was proposed to be expended, it would probably be the same in the case of expenditure from loan funds on works. The comment of the leader of the Opposition in regard to the large number of men required for doing work departmentally is compared with the number required for doing work by contract was sound. For instance, a few years ago there was a considerable amount of work done departmentally, yet the same number of officers was employed to-day, though the work was smaller in proportion, and was being done by contract. A supervisor employed on a work done departmentally must be in attendance the whole time; but one supervisor could supervise several buildings when works were being done by contract. A considerable reduction could be made if we maintained the policy, which he hoped would not be done, of doing work by contract. In such an event, however, the Minister should reduce the number of engineers in his department.

The Minister for Works: We are building three railways departmentally now.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister would carry out as few works as possible departmentally. The department had to make out a very good case for the Minister to go against his esteemed friends the contractors. If there were any doubt, the benefit would be given to the con-

tractor every time. A few years ago a great deal of railway work was constructed departmentally with the same number of engineers as were required to-day for doing work by contract.

The Minister for Works: Not so many as we are now doing departmentally.

Mr. JOHNSON: While that policy continued we were justified in asserting that the Minister was not economising in the administration of the department. In connection with the Minister's policy of doing as much work by contract as possible, regret was to be expressed that he was not continuing the generally accepted system that had been in vogue in the Works Department for some time of protecting employees who worked for contractors. It had been recognised in all Government contracts that a standard or minimum wage clause should be inserted. To-day a number of contracts contained no provision for the protection of the employees. If work were going to be done by contract those engaged on Government work by the contractors should be employed under fair conditions.

The Minister for Works: I am not aware that the conditions have been altered.

Mr. JOHNSON: Not altered, but left out altogether. There was an illustration he would give of a firm to whom the present Government gave, as much work as possible. That was Metters' manufacturing establishment. No doubt Metters got so much work because he was a cheap man. He had a Government contract now, the reason being that his tender was the cheapest.

The Honorary Minister: I do not think so.

Mr. JOHNSON: At present the firm were making stop cocks for the department, and were doing the work largely by boy labour. That was why they could do it so cheaply. The minimum wage clause was not inserted in their contract.

The Minister for Works: Is not that work done for the Waterworks Board?

Mr. JOHNSON: Anyhow, it was for a department under the Minister. The board was established by the Minister

for Works and the Engineer-in-Chief was the chairman.

The Minister for Works: By Act of Parliament.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Engineer-in-Chief would assuredly not be a party to work being done by boy labour that should be performed by competent tradesmen. That officer would never permit it unless he had direction from his Ministerial head.

The Minister for Works: I have issued no directions such as those indicated. I do not know what the member is talking about.

Mr. JOHNSON: If the Minister would give an assurance that he would see that the minimum wage and standard wage clause was inserted in all Government contracts he would drop the question. If that assurance were not given then it showed the Minister was departing from the general regulation adopted in previous years by the department. The Minister should maintain the policy in vogue for so long of seeing that those working on contracts were paid a fair rate of wage.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The clause in the departmental contracts with regard to the wages was exactly the same as it was when the hon. member administered the department. The question had never come before him and he did not think any alteration had ever been made.

Mr. JOHNSON: If that clause were in the contracts breaches were being committed, as a number of boys were doing the work. The Minister should see that the conditions of the contract were enforced.

The Minister for Works: Prove your case; bring a charge.

Mr. JOHNSON: Boy labour was employed in the Government contracts at Metters' shop.

The Minister for Works: Do you object to boy labour?

Mr. JOHNSON: If there were a minimum wage clause in connection with the contracts the minimum wage was that recognised for the particular class of work. In this instance it was moulder's work, and their wages were 11s. a day.

Boys employed at the work were not receiving 11s. a day.

The Honorary Minister: Are those boys employed as moulders?

Mr. JOHNSON: That was the method adopted by Metters, who had a larger percentage of boy labour than was generally accepted in properly run shops.

The Honorary Minister: Are the boys employed as moulders?

Mr. JOHNSON: They assisted the moulders as improvers. He knew the Minister desired to encourage boy labour. The moulders engaged in Government contracts in Metters' to-day did not receive a minimum wage.

Mr. Seaddan: How about the rate paid to men on the Monier pipes?

Mr. JOHNSON: The contract was let by the Government for the manufacture of those pipes, and a standard rate or minimum wage was put in the contract. Members of Parliament, in company with the Minister, recently inspected the works, and standing by one of the men employed he had asked the Minister what wages the man was receiving, and the reply was "about 12s." Subsequently it was found that the man was receiving only 9s. a day, and that his "offsider" only received 7s. a day. The work being done there was plasterers' work and a plasterer's wage was 11s. a day. A man engaged at the pipe-making was doing plastering work at 9s. a day, whereas the minimum wage was 11s. Did the Minister take any action with regard to that matter?

The Minister for Works: You are telling a wrong tale.

Mr. JOHNSON: What was the use of inserting that clause in the contract if it were not enforced? In all contracts provision was made against sub-letting, and yet all the contractors for the railways sub-let some of the work such as muck work.

The Honorary Minister: You permitted that yourself in connection with the Collie-Narrogin line.

Mr. JOHNSON: That was never brought under his notice. During the time he was in office he had not the slightest reason to believe that any other

method than that distinctly laid down in the contracts was carried out. So emphatic were the Government of that day in their policy of railway construction that if it were departed from he would have heard from the men on the work. At present contractors were so ignoring the provision as to sub-letting that they were calling publicly for tenders for brickwork for some of the buildings, and plastering, bricklaying, painting, and other works were all done by contract.

The Honorary Minister: Did you not do that in your contract?

Mr. JOHNSON: As far as any contract he had ever been connected with was concerned, he had never allowed piecework, as his reputation was at stake, and he wanted to do good work. Piecework never resulted in good work, the system being one of the most objectionable forms of building. Day labour always resulted in good work being done. The Minister gave great latitude to the contractors, and he did not care whether they sub-let or allowed piecework so long as the job was done. As to the administration of the works carried out in the North-West, members would forgive him for referring to the experiences he had during the short time he was there. The visits of the various Ministers to the North-West and North were absolutely picnic trips. There was nothing more ridiculous than undertaking trips there by boat and simply calling in at the various ports every time the steamer stayed there. Ministers always called at the ports where they had carried out some work, but where work was required they refused to go ashore. Absolutely the worst port on the coast was Onslow. While the people of Carnarvon could get the Ministers to call there both ways, and received all sorts of consideration to their requests, the people of Onslow could not get the Ministers to leave the boat. The provision made for the people of Onslow, which was supposed to be a port at one of the best parts of the North-West, was absolutely useless. As a matter of fact, in many cases the residents had employed their own appliances to get

their produce to the boats and, eventually, to the market.

The Honorary Minister: That means to say that they have their own lighters.

Mr. JOHNSON: That was not what was meant. In the first place, the trucks on the line between Onslow and the jetty were totally inadequate for the traffic. The horses were at work for double shifts, very often on account of the shortness of trucks, and these animals were worn out and they were a disgrace to the Government. Inspector Lander ought to go there to look at the kind of horses that were employed. The employees could not be blamed, because they had to get the merchandise off the jetty into the sheds, and that shed accommodation at Onslow was four miles from the jetty. Again it was found that the wharfinger employed by the department for carrying out the work of supervising the whole of the matters pertaining to the imports and exports—

The Minister for Works: He is not under the Works Department.

Mr. JOHNSON: There were certain duties that this officer carried out under the Works Department, and in order to keep pace with the increased shipping the wharfinger was called upon to employ casual labourers. It was found that these labourers were employed at night, on Sundays, and at all hours, and yet there was no overtime paid to them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Was the hon. member in order in discussing the wharfinger who came under the Harbours and Rivers Department? He (the Minister) knew nothing about that officer; he could be dealt with under the Colonial Secretary's Estimates.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was not expected that the Minister would have any knowledge of this wharfinger, but was the Onslow tramway not under the Works Department?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. JOHNSON: Reference was made in the Estimates to repairs to the tramway.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member was discussing the management of the jetty, the removal of goods

from the jetty to the shed, and the labour employed there. He had nothing whatever to do with that portion of the Estimates.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was desired to bring this matter under notice, and the present was the proper time to do it. If he were to talk about tramways on the Colonial Secretary's Estimates he would be told that the tramway had nothing to do with that department. In the Estimates which were then before the Committee provision was made for an improvement to the Onslow tramway and the jetty, and these were under the Public Works Department.

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. JOHNSON: Repairs to the jetty were carried out by the Works Department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Works Department repaired all jetties, harbours, and school buildings, yet it could not be said that schools were under the control of the Works Department. The same thing applied here.

Mr. JOHNSON: The remarks he had to offer would in that case be confined to criticising the very bad state of repair in which the Onslow jetty was at the present time. The officer would be dealt with when the Colonial Secretary's Estimates were under consideration. All the tramways along the North-West coast, at Point Sampson, Carnarvon, and Onslow, ran across a marsh between the jetty and the township, and whenever a big willy-willy or flood came along the marsh was washed away. The Government had spent £100,000 in filling up the marshes with earth, and while he was in Onslow during a period of three months, the marsh there was washed away on two occasions, simply because the Works Department would not bridge it over. Perhaps the Minister would say that the next time the difficulty arose in connection with the tramway these marshes would be bridged over instead of being filled in with earth. The jetty would undoubtedly be washed away in the near future unless some attention was paid to it. The stays and braces were eaten through by the teredo, and the Minister should be urged

to make provision to strengthen the jetty before the whole thing was carried away.

Mr. Scaddan: Did you bring the matter under the notice of the member for the district?

Mr. JOHNSON: It was to be supposed that the member had seen it, but he could hardly have been expected to go to the trouble of inspecting it as he (Mr. Johnson) had done, because he had a valuable consignment on the top of that jetty, and he was in mortal fear on one or two occasions that the whole of it would be swept away. It was his desire to speak in connection with the number of employees engaged in this particular tramway and the conditions under which they were employed, but as the Minister refused to accept the responsibility in connection with the matter the remarks would be deferred until the Colonial Secretary's Estimates were reached. The Minister should be congratulated—and it was not often that he (Mr. Johnson) got the opportunity of congratulating him—in connection with the agreement that was recently drawn up between the Mines Trust and the Goldfields Water Supply Administration.

Mr. Collier: How do you know what it is?

Mr. JOHNSON: It had not been published, but it was based on a large increase in price. For some years he had been urging the Government to bring about this increase, and the member for Fremantle while Minister for Works was expected to do it when he had the opportunity, but he neglected to do so.

The Minister for Works: He commenced it.

Mr. JOHNSON: The member for Fremantle had the opportunity of actually putting it into practice; he neglected to do so, and in that way the State lost some three years of increased revenue.

Mr. Scaddan: Where did you see that agreement? We cannot get a look at it at all.

Mr. JOHNSON: There were some comments on it in a publication sent to him by the Chamber of Mines in Kalgoorlie, and those comments clearly outlined that an increased price had been agreed to be-

tween the Minister and the Chamber of Mines.

*[Mr. Taylor took the Chair.]*

Mr. Collier : Are they giving sufficient now ?

Mr. JOHNSON : No ; but still one had to congratulate the Minister on making a slight improvement. The Minister was not getting anything like the value of the water, yet there was an increase in the price. When it was realised that the present Administration failed to do anything when they had the opportunity about three years ago, and that something had been done at the present time members had to be thankful for what they might consider small mercies. For years past he had thought it wrong that we should be taxed as individuals to give cheap water to mines that had arrived at a dividend paying stage. Private consumers, it was understood, had not been interfered with, but it would have been as well if the Minister had submitted to the House a copy of the agreement.

The Minister for Works : I was not aware that the hon. member would ask for that agreement ; it has nothing to do with the Estimates.

Mr. JOHNSON : When the Minister fixed up a very important agreement of this character it would be as well to place a copy of it on the Table of the House. The information which had reached him had been obtained from a publication issued by the Chamber of Mines, and even that publication did not seem to have been able to get full particulars concerning the agreement. It was to be regretted that the Minister would not give some consideration to the continual request which was made by the consumers of the goldfields scheme water in the Guildford electorate. Those people were paying interest and sinking fund on the scheme that they were drawing from, and although the House had distinctly laid it down that meter rents should be abolished, the Minister had persistently refused to recognise that resolution as applying to Guildford and had based his opposition on the fact that it would have to apply to the goldfields generally if the rents in Guildford were to be abolished.

Guildford had shown a good profit to the Government, and it was largely in excess of the amount the Government received for meter rents. In face of that fact the time had arrived when the Government should give some consideration to the repeated request for the abolition of these rents. It should be pointed out also that the Guildford portion of the supply had been recognised as separate and distinct from the other. There was no pumping required, the water just gravitated from the weir. The Minister should consider all these things, and deal fairly with the request of the people for the reduction in the price of the water, or in the amount of their contribution to the goldfields water supply to the extent of what they paid in meter rents. It would be a small reduction, but it would be a reduction which would give satisfaction to the people of Guildford. There was no objection to meters : still, it was wrong to put a meter in and then penalise the consumer to the extent of the cost of so doing. He had proposed to devote some few remarks to the necessity of amalgamating the various water supplies of the State ; but he would have an opportunity on the Loan Estimates, of which he would take advantage.

General debate concluded : Votes and Items discussed.

Item, Inspector, Construction and Maintenance Works, £400 :

Mr. JOHNSON : Year after year had he drawn attention to this particular vote and received an emphatic promise from the Minister for Works that justice would be meted out to this particular officer. The circumstances were that this officer's salary had been fixed at £300, and he had been getting a bonus of £50 for certain departmental work. A distinct understanding had been given that on the next succeeding year's Estimates his salary would be permanently fixed at £350. The present Minister for Works, during his first occupancy of the office, had honoured that promise and increased the salary to £350. Then the member for Fremantle had taken over the Public Works Department and had reduced the salary by £50. As the result of protestations made, the Minister had agreed to

go into the question, but apparently, nothing was done. Last year, when the Estimates came down he (Mr. Johnson) had again raised the question, when it was agreed that he should meet the Minister and they should go through the file together. This they did, and the Minister for the first time found that a definite promise had been made that the salary would be permanently increased, and frankly admitted that an injustice had been done, backing up this admission with a promise that the salary would be reinstated.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS :** These Estimates provided for an increase as from the 1st July, 1908.

**Mr. JOHNSON :** But the salary had been reduced in 1906, and now it was proposed to give back to the officer £50 of the total amount of which the member for Fremantle, when Minister for Works, had robbed him.

**The Minister for Works :** His salary is going up to £405.

**Mr. JOHNSON :** It was pleasant to hear that it was so. He had understood that the salary was to be £350, and that an extra £50 was to be given by way of compensation. However, it seemed that the salary was to be £400 permanently.

**The Minister for Works :** It would be £405 as from the 1st July.

**Mr. JOHNSON :** It was only right that it should be so. Still, he could not but point out that the member for Fremantle had inflicted a grave injustice upon this officer, who was one of the best in the Public Works Department. In addition to the increase in salary the back money of which the officer had been robbed should be refunded to him.

**The HONORARY MINISTER :** The hon. member knew well enough that there were two sides to the question, and that the reduction of the salary had not been due to any private action on his (the Minister's) part. The hon. member knew that while in his (the Minister's) opinion two cases might easily be constructed from the file, yet he (the Minister) believed that the view taken by the hon. member was the correct one : that was to say, that the officer should not have been deprived of the £50. But the hon. mem-

ber had carefully refrained from telling the Committee that the Public Service Commissioner had distinctly ruled that the £350 a year which the officer had been receiving, was made up of £300 salary and £50 bonus in view of the extra work undertaken. In his (the Minister's) view the officer should have been getting the £350 permanently, but on reading the file, it was easy to take the opposite view. It was distinctly unfair for the hon. member to put to the Committee that he (the Minister) had actively reduced the officer £50 a year. The hon. member knew that that was incorrect.

**Mr. JOHNSON :** The minute that had influenced the Minister was not the minute of the Public Service Commissioner, but the minute of the under secretary. In any case, supposing the Public Service Commissioner had submitted such a minute to the Minister, there must have been a protest made by the officer on learning that his salary was to be reduced : and surely the Minister, on receiving such a protest, should have looked up the file, when he would have seen that the £50 had been part of the permanent salary. He (Mr. Johnson), when Minister for Works, had distinctly stated that the officer was to get £350 a year, and the recorded statement had been sufficiently definite for the succeeding Minister to take it as a direction, and have it endorsed by Parliament. How, then, could the Public Service Commissioner ever have contended that it was only a bonus, seeing that Parliament had decided that the officer's salary should be £350 ? The Minister might reasonably arrange to refund to the officer the back money. The officer should receive the amount taken from him. Did the Minister intend to give the officer the back time the Honorary Minister admitted was taken from him wrongly ?

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS :** The only information in regard to this officer he had was that the officer was down to receive £400 for the coming year, namely £350 salary, and £50 back pay for last year. In addition the officer would receive £55 under the minimum increases item to bring him up to the minimum. He remembered dealing with this officer's



salary four year's ago. but what had eventuated since, he did not know. He realised the value of the officer, but the hon. member must be content with a promise to look into the papers to see how the matter stood. If the Public Service Commissioner had adjudicated on the question he was afraid the Minister had not much power in the matter.

Item, Supervisor in charge of furniture, £285 :

Mr. ANGWIN : Was this officer to look after the furniture for departments, or to look after the furniture likely to be manufactured in the gaol ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : This officer's time was occupied fully in supervising the manufacture of furniture for the different departments, amounting in value to £8,000 or £10,000 each year. The salary was being gradually reduced to bring it down to the classification. Some inspectorial work in connection with sanitary services had been transferred to the Colonial Secretary's Department, and the whole of the officer's time was now confined to supervising furniture for the departments.

Mr. BATH : Had this officer any control of the transfer of furniture between one department and another ? Probably furniture could be found in one department that could be utilised for another.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The officer got full information of the requisites for each department, but it was not to be supposed he could dictate to the Under Secretary for Lands as to what class of desk, for instance, the under secretary should have. The tender board would receive the requisitions, and this officer would be called in to see that the work was properly carried out.

Mr. BATH : The officer should be consulted in regard to the requisitions from different departments, and transfers might be made, otherwise the incidental accounts would run to considerable dimensions.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The officer had full power to recommend that surplus furniture from one department could be utilised instead of another article being purchased, but it would be altogether improper for the officer to go to a

Minister for instance and say there was no need for any article of furniture.

Mr. ANGWIN : Seeing a great portion of the duties of this officer had been taken away, was it still intended to give the same salary ?

The Minister for Works : Yes ; according to the classification.

Roads and Bridges, £48,594.

Item, Roads and Bridges throughout the State, grants, £30,000 :

Mr. W. PRICE regretted the reduction of nearly £5,000 in the Estimates, particularly as a number of new roads must of necessity come into existence where settlements were springing up. Some time ago a grant was given to the Albany roads board ; subsequently, the Under Secretary for Works demanded that the £85 should be spent on a certain road that did not exist not having yet been surveyed. This was the Mulikup-Hay River road, a road that would serve only nine people, and was for a district from which only £7 had been collected in rates. The roads board declined to do it, believing they were best fitted to judge where the grant should be spent. The £85 was not spent.

The Minister for Works : Then we will take it back again if you like.

Mr. W. PRICE : Better to take it back than for an officer in Perth to dictate to a roads board as to where the money should be spent. What did the officer know as to where the money should be spent ? Some of the grants made by the Government were spent in the most ridiculous ways. Last year the sum of £297 was spent on repairs to the lower King river bridge, and the money might just as well have been thrown into the Swan river for all the benefit gained by the people. Was it the intention of the Government in making grants to dictate to the local bodies as to where and how those grants should be spent ? The local body conversant with local requirements surely knew best.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The Under Secretary for Works was a most courteous gentleman, and always desired to consider carefully the requests put forth by local bodies. The hon. member might rest assured that any suggestions

they made would be given due weight. In fact works originated with the local authorities and the department endeavoured to work in with those bodies. Money for these works was not paid over until the department received a bond from the local authority undertaking that the money would be spent in the direction for which it was granted. As to the road in question, it was first brought under notice by the local authority who asked for a grant for the road. The money was provided, and a bond signed to the effect that the local authority would spend the money on that road. If the road were not in existence there must be an inquiry into the action of the local authority to see whether the money could not be got back and be distributed to some other body more careful in their requests.

[*Mr. Dalglish resumed the Chair.*]

Mr. W. PRICE: Despite the statement made by the Minister, the Under Secretary, quite apart from the bond the Minister said existed, had made certain demands upon the Albany roads board in connection with the expenditure of the money. There was ample justification for the stand he had taken.

Mr. SCADDAN: Attention should be drawn to the fact that the item had been reduced by £5,000, and it was necessary that the special attention of the Attorney General should be called to the matter. Last year that gentleman, who was not then a member of the Government, waxed most eloquent at the attitude adopted by the Government in making a reduction in the item on the Estimates. He had said he noticed during the financial years of 1903-4, 1904-5, and 1905-6 the sum annually provided for roads and bridges was £123,000. In the years 1906-7, 1907-8, and 1908-9 the sum had averaged £70,000, or a decrease of £50,000. The hon. member pointed out that land settlement had been going ahead at a great rate, and that one would have thought the settlers would have been given every possible assistance in the way of road construction. He had also pointed out that railways had been built, but that roads were required to feed them, and that therefore the grant

should have been kept at the old level, or even increased to £150,000. The member for Greenough continued in that strain at considerable length. Had that gentleman, now that he was a Minister, forgotten that he had practically promised his constituents to urge that further money should be granted for road construction? On the very first Estimates after he had become a Minister there was a still further reduction. It was to be hoped the Attorney General would justify his attitude. There was no doubt that there was a great deal in what the member for Greenough said on this question last year. The agriculturist must be given an opportunity to get to the railway. In a country like Western Australia where the surface soil was so loose, the construction of roads was absolutely necessary. What influence had the Attorney General used on the Government to bring about a further decrease of £5,000 instead of obtaining an increase? The Minister's great point last year against the Government was their continued reduction of the grant for roads and bridges in the State, and he described their attitude as economy run mad. If the Minister desired to be consistent he would have to support the Committee in urging the Government to make more liberal concessions for the construction of main roads, more particularly in the back agricultural and goldfields districts. The point was that the Government could not see that they were showing economies in other directions, because in the subsequent votes that the Committee would have to consider it would be found that the Government had not kept the promise that they gave to the Chamber last year; and while they were reducing the vote under discussion they were not reducing the votes around the City. The Attorney General now should bring some influence to bear on the Ministry and see that the country districts got justice in the direction of keeping up the grant for roads and bridges throughout the State.

Mr. ANGWIN: The roads board vote was similar to the municipal subsidies, and a protest should be entered against the action of the Government, because

it showed a desire to place the onus of the raising of revenue on the local bodies. If it was necessary for the Government to raise more revenue they should do it instead of placing the responsibility on the shoulders of others. We must realise that with the settlement which was taking place, this vote should be increased rather than reduced, and the Government should adopt some means of raising revenue for the purpose of opening up roads throughout the State. He could not agree with the member for Ivanhoe that the Government had not reduced the grant in the metropolitan area, because it was found that the reduction had been as severe in this area as in any other part of the State. Twelve months ago the Government intimated their intention to bring forward measures whereby they would increase the revenue, but nothing had been done to attain that object, and they had adopted the means of reducing votes such as that for roads and bridges, thereby necessitating the local bodies raising the revenue themselves. As the Committee did not have the power to increase the vote he would enter his protest against the action of the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It might be explained that the roads boards were never better off than they were at the present time.

Mr. Jacoby: They were never so badly off for roads.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No one could agree with the hon. member in that remark. The roads boards were never better off because just recently there had been an allocation of £25,000 from loan moneys, and these bodies had that amount to expend; and that, in addition to the £20,000 provided in the Estimates, would make a very respectable total so far as this year was concerned. The member for Ivanhoe had spoken of the necessity for making roads as well as providing spur lines of railway. The Government realised that responsibility and were providing on the Loan Estimates for these roads to be made, and were distributing money for that purpose at the present time.

Mr. Jacoby: It is not enough.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In comparison with last year's vote, the reduction had been only £4,579, and the special grant was as much as last year, in fact, it was slightly over last year.

Mr. SCADDAN: Members were still waiting for a statement from the Attorney General. In his speech of last year the Attorney General was most eloquent on the subject of roads, when he said—

"Let us go through the expenditure on roads. We find a total on the Estimates for this year of £17,000, but out of that sum no less than £5,000 is to be expended on the main roads within a radius of 20 miles of Perth."

The CHAIRMAN: The relevancy could not be recognised.

Mr. SCADDAN: Reference was only being made to what the hon. member said last year on roads and bridges.

The CHAIRMAN: It was not relevant to the item under discussion.

Mr. SCADDAN: It had reference to the item. Could the Minister say now what roads this money would be expended upon?

The Minister for Works: It will be distributed among the roads boards.

Mr. SCADDAN: There was no desire to specify roads. The Attorney General went on to say 12 months ago—

"That meant that 25 per cent. of the amount voted for roads and bridges is devoted to what I might call more or less ornamental objects. The ratio is undoubtedly too large."

In another place the Minister said—

"Recognising the financial position, I do not make that claim, but I assert unhesitatingly that it is a serious blot on the policy of the Government: a very serious reflection upon their statesmanlike capacity and administrative ability that they should have chosen this particular time for dealing so serious a blow against country districts, upon which at the present time the hopes of Western Australia are so largely fixed for the future development of the State."

In another place the Minister added—

“If they had treated my constituency unfairly their conduct is iniquitous, and, on the other hand, if they have treated all the country districts unfairly their iniquity is simply multiplied by the number of constituencies they have so treated.”

If the treatment was iniquitous last year what were we to say about it this year, when the Attorney General, who was then making all these remarks, was a member of the Ministry? What influence had he brought to bear on the Ministry in making right what he then said was wrong? It would be interesting to know from the Attorney General how he could justify his attitude now as compared with what it was last year.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was somewhat unfortunate that on an opportunity of generally discussing the financial policy of the Government he ran a considerable danger of laying himself open to a charge of irrelevance, and being called to order by the Chairman. Yet, if he had to reply effectively to the hon. member it would not be possible to do so without dealing with the whole of the financial question. He was inclined to think that the hon. member was more usefully occupied in reading to the House the speeches made by him (the Attorney General) last session than in giving hon. members the benefit of his own observations. Judging by the way some members of the Opposition talked, one would imagine that the Government were in the happy position of having a bank somewhere up in the sky from which they could draw off illimitable revenue: but if hon. members would reflect for a few minutes they must conclude that unless the Government were to close the financial year with a serious deficit there must be economy all along the line.

Mr. Walker: That is Nanson's answer to Nanson.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Although the particular vote under discussion had been reduced by £500 the votes for municipal purposes had been reduced even more severely, and there had been large reductions in other votes,

notably that for hospitals. The Government had two alternatives before them: If they were to provide the revenue necessary for supplying all the road requirements of the State they could only do so by imposing additional taxation.

Mr. Gill: Did you not realise that last year?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly, but he had also realised last year that the Government were fully justified in constructing roads out of loan funds. Supposing that, not content with making a liberal allowance from loan authorisation for the construction of roads, the Government were to go further and impose additional taxation, and hand the proceeds over to the roads boards to be spent on giving further road facilities: the position would be that the roads board already had full powers of local taxation, and the central Government would be doing precisely what the local roads board had power to do themselves. Whether the additional revenue was to be raised by the roads boards or by the Government it would in either case have to be raised by direct taxation. If in the course of a year or two the finances of the State were to materially improve, the Government, if still in power would allot more liberal sums for the purpose of road construction. It would be folly for anyone to contend that the Government, largely supported as it was by country members, was not imbued with the desire to afford all possible facilities for the people in the back blocks, agricultural or mineral.

Mr. Jacoby: Will you give us some concrete instances?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member had already been given a concrete instance by the Minister for Works. Perhaps the hon. member would give the Government the benefit of his valuable experience and point out where additional revenue could be secured without imposing additional taxation. Did the hon. member wish the Government to increase the land tax? Would that be a popular measure with the hon. member's constituents, or throughout

the agricultural districts? Was it not infinitely better that the roads boards should avail themselves of the full powers of taxation than that the Government should impose an additional measure of taxation and hand the proceeds over to the roads boards? Last session he had urged that roads should be constructed out of loan fund, and the Government were doing that to-day. He was confident that there was a vast body of opinion in the country districts supporting the attitude of the Government in refraining from imposing additional taxation; and these people recognised fully that unless the Government imposed additional taxation there must be a certain amount of self denial in regard to the roads boards. What the country districts objected to was that the whole burden of retrenchment should fall upon them. However, throughout the whole of the Estimates an effort had been made impartially to distribute the burden of economy over agricultural, town, and mining districts. Wherever possible economy had been effected: and after having listened carefully to the extracts which the hon member had read from his (the Attorney General's) speeches of last session he could gather from those extracts nothing which was not fully in accord with the policy of the Government, as it was to be found in the pages of the Estimates.

Mr. SCADDAN. Although never likely to reach to the heights occupied by the Attorney General in point of oratory, yet he Mr. (Scaddan) endeavoured, as far as possible, to be true to his pledges and to be consistent in all things. He was unable to discover where the Attorney General could show consistency in the attitude adopted as a member of the present Government in this particular as compared with the attitude adopted as member for Greenough not twelve months since.

The Minister for Works: What has that to do with the vote?

Mr. SCADDAN: If it had nothing to do with the vote what had it to do with the vote last year?

The Minister for Works: The hon. member's consistency has nothing to do with the vote.

Mr. SCADDAN: No; because the hon member's consistency did not exist, while the roads vote did. It was necessary to show the hon. member's utterances to his constituents. The same argument the Attorney General used in defending the present further reduction in the vote could have been urged last year in answer to the arguments the member for Greenough advanced against last year's reduction. The hon. member urged that the Minister had lectured him last year as to the duties of roads boards. This is what the hon. member said last year. It was to be found on page 634 of *Hansard*—

"I can remember some time ago, soon after I arrived in the State, it became my duty as member for the district to interview the Minister for Works, and with ill-concealed impatience, I am afraid, I submitted to a somewhat lengthy lecture from that hon. gentleman upon the duty these country districts have of taxing themselves. I was able to point out to the honourable gentleman that the particular roads board whose case I was pleading had had a peculiarly unfortunate experience as to the merits of the ratepayers taxing themselves when dealing with the present Administration. This board had not perhaps done everything it might have done in taxing its ratepayers, but no doubt stung into action by the reproaches of the Minister for Works and the Honorary Minister, this roads board did succeed in raising more revenue than it had ever raised previously, and it fully expected after having made that effort it would have its enterprise fittingly rewarded and that the Government grant would be larger that year than in any other year. But perceive the dismay of this unfortunate board after making this effort, after extracting this money out of the ratepayers—perceive its dismay on seeing that the general grant made to it was lower than in the preceding year and that it had

sank to a sum of under £200, only a nominal sum per mile for every road in the district."

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot see the relevancy of this to the present vote. It may have been relevant to last year's vote.

Mr. SCADDAN: Last year the hon. member pointed out what had happened in the previous year. If it was relevant to show the position taken up by the Government in making a reduction in the general vote last year, it should be relevant in pointing out the attitude of the Attorney General in supporting a further reduction this year.

The CHAIRMAN: It was not relevant to the vote. One might even say the speech was tedious repetition.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Attorney General now urged the excuse that roads boards must tax themselves. There must be some reason for the further reduction this year on the high reduction last year and in previous years as referred to last year by the Attorney General. What could justify the Attorney General in defending his attitude this year having taken up such a different attitude last year?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must discuss the item, not the Attorney General.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Attorney General's attitude was a most peculiar one.

Mr. PLESSE protested against the reduction of the item. He would be neglecting the interests of his district if he did not. It was understood it was all a question of funds. For a considerable time roads boards in the back country had noticed with great regret the Government had year after year reduced the vote. He had not made a protest earlier in the debate for the reason, he thought from what the Minister said, some provision should be made for a reasonable amount for roads and bridges from loan moneys, but the £25,000 from that source would not be sufficient for the growing needs of outlying districts. Considerable sums were spent in the construction of main roads in some of the Eastern States, and Parliament

in this State had not fully realised the responsibility upon it in the construction of roads. We should be prepared to enter upon a bold policy of road construction. Hon. members had already expressed the opinion that we should be prepared to spend a much larger sum from loan moneys in the construction of roads as feeders to railways, and in bringing down any Bill for the construction of a railway the Government should provide a much larger amount for this purpose than had been provided in the past. In the Loan Estimates had due provision been made for the construction of roads by way of feeders to railways? With regard to the question of rating by local boards, the boards were alive to their responsibilities, and during the past two or three years a considerable sum had been raised in agricultural and other districts in this direction: but we had an expanding country, and settlement was extending long distances back, and the roads boards were not able to derive much revenue from the outlying centres, so that Parliament should provide a much larger sum than was placed on the present Estimates. The sum of £25,000 on the Loan Estimates would be totally inadequate for the requirements of the country, and it was to be hoped the Minister would accept the expression of opinion in the House as some indication that the country needed a larger sum spent in the direction of road construction.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Minister might inform members whether in the future there would be any increase in the vote, or would it gradually disappear altogether? The system of expending a large sum from Loan Fund on roads was a bad one. The Consolidated Revenue Fund should not be decreased and the Loan Fund unduly piled up for this purpose. One result of adopting such a practice would be greatly to increase the debt of the country and the further expenditure annually for payment of interest, thus placing additional burdens on the people.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon member was getting beyond the item. He would have a chance of dealing with the Loan

Estimates when they were before members.

Mr. HOLMAN: The grant for roads and bridges was materially reduced at a time when the country was being opened up, when new goldfields were being discovered and settlement was extending. The high freights charged for cartage in the back country was due to the fact that the old roads were almost in an unfit state for traffic. More would be done for the people generally if money was spent on roads and water supplies in the back country than by spending large sums on the coast. The old settled districts could best bear reduction in this vote, but the new districts should be assisted in every possible way. The Minister should give members an assurance that a different policy would be adopted in the future

Roads (Revotes, etc.), £3,124 :

Item—Maintenance of main roads, Claremont-Subiaco, £140 :

Mr. SCADDAN: The decrease in the item was in accordance with a promise of the Minister last year that these revotes would be reduced by 30 per cent. On looking at subsequent items, however, inconsistencies were manifest. For instance the vote for the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road was reduced more than 30 per cent., while for the Perth-Fremantle road the sum was £200 in excess of its proper proportion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In regard to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road, the item had been reduced from £160 spent last year to £112 this, which was practically 33½ per cent. off.

Mr. Scaddan: There is more than that when compared with the vote for last year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then there was the item of £238 for the Perth-Bayswater road. The amount of £340 was allocated last year between different roads boards controlling the road. For instance Perth received £75, Bayswater £115, and West Guildford had £150, making £340. Last year that part of the road was not completed, and, therefore, their proportion was not paid over. The hon. member would find that the amount

put down this year was £238, a third less than the amount voted last year. The full expenditure did not take place last year because the road was not constructed right through. With regard to Item 44, the amount provided for the North Fremantle council's proportion of this vote was not paid over during the last financial year; it was held in abeyance through some dispute in connection with an alleged promise of an additional £100. They would not take the £195 which was allocated to them for their proportion, and, therefore, it was provided this year. It was their proportion of the maintenance last year.

Mr. Collier: Will the Minister explain the item of £112 for the maintenance of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There was no explanation to be made in connection with the item.

Mr. Bath: Will the Minister put it on the same basis as the item in reference to the Claremont-Subiaco road?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If it was in error he certainly would, but there might be an explanation to make concerning it.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Minister's reply was not satisfactory at all. Ever since he (Mr Scaddan) had been in the House he had made an attack on these particular votes, and when he did so first there was no vote for the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road. When the present Minister took over the Works Department on a previous occasion he made provision for this road, but it was not known whether he did so because he feared that opposition would come from the Opposition quarter.

The Minister for Works: Fear had nothing to do with it.

Mr. SCADDAN: The money was for maintenance, and the Minister provided money for maintenance before the money for construction had been actually expended. That was in 1906. The point was that the people never made a request for the amount for maintenance, and what members would like to know was what caused the Minister to place £500 on the Estimates for maintenance without

a request and before the roads boards had expended their money for construction. As time went on this amount was gradually reduced. It was the first duty of the Government in a country like Western Australia, where we were extending agricultural settlement and opening up new goldfields, to construct new roads and leave the maintenance to local bodies. Last year when other members took up the same attitude, and the Government found they were in a serious position, they promised to make a reduction of 30 per cent. or thereabouts in all these votes. What had happened? It was found that in connection with the Claremont-Subiaco road, £140 had been left, and the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road had £112. Why £112 in one instance and £140 in another? The amounts should have been similar. With regard to the sum owing to North Fremantle he was prepared to accept the Minister's statement, but it would not prevent him (Mr. Scaddan) from just as carefully watching all these items next year. Attention should be drawn also to the item Caves road, £500. On the one hand we had Parliament deciding to wipe out votes for main roads last year, and on the other hand we had the Government introducing a new main road, and placing no less a sum than £500 on the Estimates for the Caves road.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member had been allowed to discuss items from 36 to 44, and he ought to confine himself to those.

Mr. SCADDAN: It would save time, perhaps, if he were allowed to refer to 45 as well. The Minister should report progress in order that he might supply the information whether the difference in the two items which had been referred to was a mistake, or whether it was intended in the case of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder road to make the reduction to £112.

The Minister for Works: If it is an error I will adjust it.

Mr. SCADDAN: It was an error from the standpoint of the Minister, as explained last year; but he (Mr. Scaddan) was not quite sure that it was not in-

tentional on the part of somebody or other.

Item, Maintenance of Main Roads, Perth-Fremantle, £871:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Once more would he enter a protest against this item. Last year he had not been prepared to accept the then proposed reduction of 30 per cent., for it had seemed to him that it should be greater. While these amounts were being expended on ornamental roads we were of necessity refusing a few paltry pounds to hard-driven settlers with which to open up a track between their holdings and civilisation. The Minister had remarked that several applications had been put in through hon. members as forlorn hopes. He (Mr. O'Loghlen) had taken care that but very few applications had been put in from his electorate, hoping that those few would be attended to.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is getting wide of the item.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: To enter a protest against the meagreness of the reduction on main roads when nothing was available for the roads in country districts had been his sole object in rising.

Item, Maintenance of Caves road, £500:

Progress reported.

#### BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

*House adjourned at 11.25 p.m.*