

Noss.
 Hon. J. Duffell
 Hon. J. Ewing
 Hon. J. Mills
 Hon. H. Stewart
 Hon. V. Hamersley
 (Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I move—

That the resolution be transmitted by message to the Legislative Assembly for its concurrence.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—SANDALWOOD TRADE MONOPOLY.

Debate resumed from 31st October on motion by Hon. E. H. Gray—

That all papers (including tenders) relating to the proposal of the Government to grant a monopoly in the trade of sandalwood be laid upon the Table of the House.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [6.8]: The papers asked for by the hon. member have been laid on the Table in another place. This does away with the necessity for debating the question any further. The papers are now available to all members of this Chamber. I, therefore, ask Mr. Gray to withdraw his motion.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: With the permission of the House, I will withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

RESOLUTION—ESPERANCE NORTHWARDS RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Legislative Assembly, requesting the Council's concurrence in the following resolution, now considered—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should obtain the necessary authority as early as possible to extend the Esperance Northwards railway line (now in course of construction) so that it may junction with the existing lines of the State at Norseman.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [6.12]: I move—

That the Assembly's resolution be agreed to.

It would be only courtesy on our part to agree to this resolution, notwithstanding the fact that we have already carried a motion dealing with the same subject. Mr. Kirwan wishes to send his motion to the Assembly for its concurrence. In view of the vote that has just been taken it seems that this House has agreed that the railway should be built as early as possible.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [6.13]: I protest against this House being put into such an absurd position as to be asked to agree

to a resolution which is entirely contrary to the motion that we have just carried by the overwhelming majority of 16 to 5. If the resolution of the Legislative Assembly is to be sent back to that Chamber, we should send it back amended in conformity with the motion we have just carried. It would be an extraordinary thing if two motions so distinctly contrary to one another left this House as if we had agreed to both. We cannot agree to both. The difference between the two motions is vital. I protest against the action of the Leader of the House in asking us to pass this resolution in its present form. I could not vote for that. The best course to adopt is to send the resolution back to the Assembly in an amended form, with the request that they should concur in that amendment. The position is somewhat difficult. We have already decided to send our own motion to the Legislative Assembly. It is, therefore, difficult to know what is the best course to pursue, but the best course is not that suggested by the Leader of the House, which would place this Chamber in a curious position.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 8th November, 1923.

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

CONDOLENCE—THE LATE LADY WITTENOOM.

President's acknowledgment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have received the following letter:—

Dear Mr. Stubbs,—I have duly received your letter of the 1st November, conveying to me the sympathetic resolution which was passed by the members of your House in

connection with my late bereavement. Thanking you for your personal sympathy, and with my kind regards, Yours sincerely,
E. H. Wittenoom.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Johnston and the Queensland Insurance Co., Ltd.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [4.40]: I wish to make a personal explanation. Last week I asked some questions here regarding the operations of a new insurance company. Since then I have received from a member of the other House, the Hon. J. Duffell, a letter addressed to him by the Western Australian manager of the Queensland Insurance Co., Ltd. As I have no desire to do an injustice to the Queensland Insurance Company, which is a well-known, old-established, and highly reputable insurance company, I should like to read the letter to the House.

Mr. Underwood: The questions should never have been allowed, anyhow.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The letter is dated the 3rd instant, and is signed G. Kerruish, manager for Western Australia. It reads—

Perth, 3rd November, 1923.

Dear Mr. Duffell,—My attention has been drawn to the questions put to the Premier by Mr. E. B. Johnston, relating to the activities of the Queensland Probate Insurance Company Ltd., vide "West Australian" of 1st instant, and as it is quite within reason to suppose that a number of the insuring public may confuse that company with ours owing to the similarity of title, I would esteem it a favour if you would kindly bring the letter under the notice of Mr. Johnston with the object of prevailing upon him to take an opportunity of explaining that his questions had no bearing on, or reference to, our company. Would you inform Mr. Johnston that we fully appreciate that when drawing up his questions he had no intention of causing us any misgivings; on the contrary, I am sure he is not unfriendly disposed toward us. You will doubtless remember that when we learned that the Queensland Probate Co. intended operating in W.A., I was so concerned that I wrote my general manager at Sydney pointing out the confusion that was likely to arise, and it was rather a pity that owing to the company having been registered in Queensland just prior to our objection, no action could be taken. Personally I consider the Registrar in Queensland should not have permitted registration under their present title, as upon reference to their articles I find that they are permitted to write fire and accident insurance in addition to probate life business. Whereas the company in question only came into being within the past two years, our company has operated since 1885; and indeed our directors and shareholders are extremely proud of the company's financial

strength and the popularity it enjoys throughout the Commonwealth. If Mr. Johnston would refer to the Queensland Probate Company as a company of recent origin, writing ostensibly life business, and our company as a fire, marine and accident company established in the year 1885, it would convey to the public that there is no connection between these companies. In view of the foregoing, I would be grateful if you would have the matter cleared up in the manner indicated.

QUESTION—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS.

Retainers to ex-employees.

Mr. MANN asked the Premier: 1, Are any ex-employees of Wyndham Meat Works being paid a weekly retainer till next season commences? 2, If so, how many? 3, What were their positions at the works last season, and what amount is being paid to each ex-employee?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, in accordance with the practice of the trade generally. 2 and 3, The number to be retained will not be definitely decided until the arrival of the works manager by the "Bambra" on the 13th instant.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Willcock, leave of absence for four weeks granted to the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) on the ground of ill-health.

On motion by Mr. Mullany, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—PINJARRA-DWARD RAILWAY EXTENSION ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1922-23.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 6th November; Mr. Angelo in the Chair.

Department of Railways, Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister.

Vote—Railways, £2,235,000 (partly considered):

Mr. WILSON (Collie) [4.41]: First of all I wish to congratulate the Minister for Railways and the Commissioner of Railways on their endeavours to bring the expenditure of the department within reach of the income. I would not have said much on this vote but for the fact that certain references to coal supplies have been made during the

discussion. As I am looked upon as being the member for coal, it is only fair that I should give some expression to what I believe. With regard to the new agreement which has been entered into, I consider that the Government have made a fair bargain for themselves so far as price is concerned, and also given a fair deal in regard to the wages under the industrial agreement operating in the Colliery coal industry. The new agreement secures a continuity of the present rate of wages, which is a thing on which I can heartily congratulate the House and also the State. Regarding the term of the agreement, let me point out that up to the outbreak of the war the term had always been three years: from 1905 to 1908, from 1908 to 1911, and from 1911 to 1914, the last being during the Labour Government's time. Then we come to war-time. The agreement terminated about the time that the war broke out, consequently a renewal was put off repeatedly. Incidentally let me remark that the Newcastle trade obtained an advance of 1s. in 1914. At the end of the following year, when the bank to bank strike occurred, the matter was referred to an arbitrator in the person of Judge Edmunds, who granted an advance of 2s. 7d. per ton. I say advisedly that if it was good enough for the Newcastle miners to get such an advance in their wages, it was also good enough for the coal miners here. As the Premier has often jokingly said, I led my men across and got the money. In similar circumstances I would do so again. The coal miner here is entitled to be remunerated for his work just as much as the Newcastle miner. The agreement is all right from those two standpoints, but nevertheless a sad mistake has been made. The mistake is that the new agreement excludes new fields from its operation for the next three years. The old agreement had a clause which set forth that the Commissioner was entitled to use 20 per cent. of a portion of the department's consumption for the purpose of helping the development of new fields, or of new mines discovered at Colliery or elsewhere. The prospects of developments in new coal finds are good, and should not be lost sight of. There is at Wilga an extensive deposit on which a considerable amount of money has been spent; and the indications of good coal there are sufficient to warrant attention from the Government. Another seam has been found at Colliery, and is looked upon as being the finest in that district. Yet that seam, like the Wilga discovery, is to be left out in the cold for the next three years. It is usual every three years to have a round table conference in respect of Colliery coal. I think it was Mr. Backshall who first suggested it should be held, so as to inculcate into the department and the locomotive drivers generally, the benefits of burning Colliery coal exclusively. In passing I must congratulate the Government, and the Railway Department, on burning practically 100 per cent. of Colliery coal. That has been brought about by these round table conferences. In 1917 Mr. Angwin was at one of these con-

ferences. In 1920 another conference was held, the Minister for Mines being chairman. Of this year's conference I have the minutes, given me by the secretary of the Miners' Union. The conference took place on the 17th August. What I cannot understand about the allocations made is that some men on the conference had an interest in another mine but let the occasion pass, and agreed with the Government or the department and the locomotive drivers that coal should be distributed for the next three years as follows: 33 per cent. going to the Proprietary mine, 20 per cent. to the Westralian mine, 20 per cent. to the Co-operative mine, 14 per cent. to the Cardiff mine, and 13 per cent. to the Premier mine. The member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) was chairman of the conference. I cannot understand why no margin was left to allow the Commissioner to encourage any new mines by permitting them to come in.

The Minister for Mines: They could not come in during the three years agreement, anyhow.

Mr. WILSON: No, but in the previous agreement a percentage was left over, to be given at the discretion of the Commissioner for developmental work in other mines. No such provision is made in the new agreement.

Mr. Underwood: In other words, it is another monopoly.

Mr. WILSON: Personally I think the point was overlooked at the conference.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think any new mine could be opened up sufficiently to supply any substantial quantity during the next three years.

Mr. WILSON: They could supply a little coal while developing, and to a new mine every little helps. The Railway Department has been at pains to go through the Royal Commissioner's report and take out the little tit-bits that suit it; while overlooking recommendations that might be of benefit to the State. I say advisedly that the mixture of hard and soft coals produces the best fuel the engines could have.

The Minister for Mines: What about the cost of mixing?

Mr. WILSON: That would not be very much.

The Minister for Mines: How would you mix Premier coal with Proprietary coal?

Mr. WILSON: Give me the job of mixing it, and I will do it.

Mr. Underwood: Some of the coals cannot be mixed. They discovered that on the trial ship.

Mr. WILSON: I was on the trial locomotive. There is a difference between locomotives and ships, inasmuch as locomotives have forced draught to a much greater extent than have the ships. Most of the hard coals give a great percentage of ash, and so clinkers badly. The soft coals have less ash. The mixture seems to relieve both, keeping the soft coal from flaming too quickly, and putting a bit of life into the hard coal. That

was the evidence of the drivers appointed by the Royal Commissioner.

Mr. Underwood: One of them went on strike.

Mr. WILSON: I am not dealing with strikes now. The engineers, Butcher and Appleby, declared that the mixture gave the best results. Drivers all over the State will say that the mixture of hard and soft coals is just what they want. By and by we shall be exhausting the hard coals and will have all the soft coals left on our hands. Since the one helps the other, it is up to the department to see that they are mixed. Then there is the question of covering the coal in the wagons and bins. It will probably save the department thousands per annum. I am glad to see the department has now partially adopted the system; but it should be done exclusively. It is nothing to lose five or ten per cent. through the coal on top of the wagon crumbling into dust, which means that it is lost in the fire or smoke box. We hear continually that the price of coal ought to be lower. I agree that it should be, provided the food-stuffs, clothes and other commodities used by the men were cheapened also. Last year I asked the Minister what the Railway Department has saved by using Collie coal over the past five years. He replied that it had made a total saving of £730,728 in five or six years. That being so, it is wise to conserve the fuel. If an efficient mixture can be secured, then it is up to the department to look into the matter and see what can be done. In regard to the conference and the new contract, last session I spoke to the Minister about introducing a Coal Mines Act Amendment Bill. In July of this year the Minister opened a conference of the miners called to consider suggestions for the draft of the proposed new Bill. On the 13th July I introduced to the Minister a deputation from the miners' union on the question of the agreement and regarding mining timber. The Minister said he would look into it. The next I knew was that the union had written to the Commissioner asking was it true that the Amalgamated Collieries had given notice of withdrawal from the agreement. That was found to be true. In the meantime it was found out that there had been a good deal of misconception with the companies and the department on the question of what should be paid for Collie coal. The mining companies contended that the rise of 3s. given three years ago should be given without any reduction from that flat rate, because the men had received an increase of 3s. The Amalgamated Collieries took up that stand and said they were underpaid. The file discloses that Mr. Lynn practically demanded £12,000 extra payment from the department. The claim was settled by the payment of £3,250. It was then suggested that the Amalgamated Collieries should withdraw from the agreement because of the alteration of system of payment. Under the old agreements they were paid on the Carpenter calorimeter. The recommendation of the Royal Commissioner was that the Carpenter calorimeter, being obso-

lete, should be replaced by the Bomb calorimeter. After a delay of several years, due to the war, a Bomb calorimeter was secured and the clash in the difference in payments was the result.

The Minister for Mines: That is the only difference it could make, for the Coal Tribunal fixes the basic price.

Mr. WILSON: The Commissioner recommended that 500 b.t.u. was the difference between the Carpenter calorimeter and the Bomb calorimeter. They say "You make the Bomb calorimeter 10,000 b.t.u. as against the Carpenter calorimeter 10,500 b.t.u. I suppose the Department can now explain why they make the standard price 19s. per ton for 9,900 b.t.u. The contract was fixed up, signed and sealed with the Amalgamated Collieries, but one company was left out. I want to give credit where credit is due. When the Department wanted to make an agreement with a small company different from that which they gave the Amalgamated Collieries, the Minister stepped in and said, "There can be no two differently worded agreements with two companies; the agreement made with the big company must also be given to the smaller company." I asked the Minister to-day whether he had received any notification about the arbitration agreed upon between the Railway Department and the Premier Company which is to take place at Collie. In passing I might refer to the appointment of the arbitrator. The gentleman who has been asked to carry out this duty is the Inspector of Mines. Thousands of pounds are involved in the question, and the inspector is appointed without being asked whether he is agreeable to undertake the job. No mention is made of payment for his services, and it may not be out of place here to state that he is the only Inspector of Mines in the State who has a ticket, yet he is on the lowest wage rung of the ladder for inspectors.

The Minister for Mines: He is a good man, anyhow.

Mr. WILSON: And it is about time you paid him accordingly. He passed a very stiff examination in New South Wales, an examination that is harder than any in England. The Minister gives this officer extra work to do and does not suggest anything about payment. Another matter I wish the Minister to look into is the question of paying what is owing to the Premier Company by the Railway Department.

The Minister for Mines: What about the money they owe to the department?

Mr. WILSON: If one company can get £3,250 from the Railway Department, surely a smaller company that cannot fight a law case on account of its resources should also get something in proportion. The amount is only a few hundred pounds, and that to an infant concern might be the means of keeping it going. I desire to say a few words in regard to the deputation I introduced to the Premier a few weeks back on the subject of the slackness of trade at Collie. I drew at-

tention at that deputation to the fact that men from Collie were threatening to leave the State, and that the Government should step in to prevent the depletion of the population in that district. I pointed out that the total trade at Collie had been on the decrease for some time back, and that that was to a great extent due to the fact that the bunkering trade was not coming here. The figures in this respect for the last three years have dwindled from 116,000 tons to 99,000 tons and then to 51,000 tons. The total trade for the nine months of 1923 amounted to 336,000 tons, which was a falling off compared with the corresponding nine months of last year. I pointed out, too, that the falling off in the bunkering in coal alone meant a loss of £100,000 to the State, and that in round figures the total loss on this account alone was about £160,000. I suggested that some inquiries should be made into the cause of this. We should know why we are losing so much trade. In addition to the loss of 19s. a ton which is obtained for the coal at the pit's mouth, the Railway Department lose 12s. 4d. a ton in freight by the reduced trade. Then there has to be remembered the loss sustained by the lumpers who handle the coal on the wharves. There should be a means by which we could ascertain why this loss is occurring. When the Commissioner of Railways tells us that the price of coal has increased since 1914 from 11s. to 18s. 6d. per ton at the present time, a difference of practically 80 per cent., he forgets to state that he himself has increased freights by over 100 per cent. That increase is too much. If by any chance we could get the freights reduced by 1s. or 2s. per ton to the seaport, that would assist to restore the industry to some extent to its former basis. I trust the Minister will cause some investigation to be made. I was asked by the Miners' Union at Collie to submit a motion to the House in the direction of demanding an inquiry, but if the Minister says that he will see that one is conducted, I shall stay my hand. The Minister told us that in 1923 the average price of New South Wales coal at the pit's mouth was 16s. 7d., while in Western Australia it was 19s. The Minister, however, forgets that the coal he generally gets from the Eastern States, costs 21s. 9d. per ton and not 16s. 7d. He brings into his average Lithgow and other cheap coals in order to inflate the price of Collie coal. The price of best coal in New South Wales is 21s. 9d. f.o.b., Newcastle. I got this figure from the Commissioner yesterday. Therefore the statement made by the Minister is only a half-truth. When the Leader of the Opposition was speaking the other evening, the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy) interjected that the Government were the only consumers of Collie coal. That is not so. The position is one of fifty-fifty. Last year the State took 236,434 tons of Collie coal while the bunkering trade accounted for over 200,000 tons. I regret very much that the Railway Department did not see fit to

make provision for securing coal from the new seams, because it is only by doing that that we can hope to get the best results. If it is not now too late I suggest that the Minister should give all a chance. There is plenty of room for all, even Irwin, where the prospects are said to be encouraging. If the coal there is what it is said to be, it should be given a chance. In my opinion it is the soft coal measures of Collie. At the same time it is a valuable asset.

The Minister for Mines: But Irwin cannot hope to begin to supply within three years, and they are not certain where they are yet.

Mr. WILSON: If they had an incentive, those connected with the enterprise at Irwin would no doubt go on with their efforts.

The Minister for Mines: They would have the whole of the Midland Railway to themselves.

Mr. WILSON: Wilga is in the same position. Then there is the Griffin Syndicate who were working a mine, and they are tied up to the extent of some thousands of pounds. A word or two about ramps. We have heard of gold and oil ramps; we have also had coal ramps. I exposed one some years ago in the Donnybrook district where a man was foolish enough to drop some Newcastle coal in a shaft. Any coal miner can tell Newcastle coal by merely looking at it. This man—his name was O'Grady—brought the piece of coal to this House, and at that time Mr. Gregory was Minister for Mines. I was sent for and, of course, we had a drink—

The Minister for Mines: That was the end of the chapter.

Mr. WILSON: No, it was the beginning of it. O'Grady had a couple of bags full of coal specimens with him and taking out a piece said, "That is nice coal." Then dipping into the other bag he remarked, "I don't like this so well." "No," I replied, "but I wish I had three feet of it; it is about the best piece of Newcastle coal I have seen." The man went away with a Calyx drill and a promise of help from Mr. Gregory. I told Mr. Gregory that it was Newcastle coal, but not to mind my assurance and to send down a man to inspect the locality. The officer went down and later reported that the coal was foreign to the locality it was supposed to have come from. The other day I was passing a tailor's shop when I was invited to enter and inspect a sample of coal. "That's a nice piece of coal; it came from Wilga," was the greeting. I replied quickly, "I'm damned sure it did not." I urged my friend to take it to Dr. Simpson, but the reply was, "I will get another piece." I said, "No, a piece of this will do." Then I remarked that I had saved one man from going to gaol some years before, and I had no intention of saving anyone else. Lately the inspector of mines from Collie proceeded to get some coal from one of these fields and Mr. Wilson, of the Department, was with him. A piece of Newcastle coal was put in their hands as a sample of what the district was

producing. That piece of Newcastle coal is still with the inspector at his office in Collie. These things should not be permitted. The inspectors and the department should see that no analysis is given unless they first take the coal from a gutter, cut down the coal seam by themselves, clean the pavement, and take their own samples. We know that no oil can be found on a granite formation.

The Minister for Mines: Or soap factories.

Mr. WILSON: Our coal has enough to fight without having to fight down prejudices that have arisen against it. I hope the Minister will take into consideration the effect of what is meant by giving the whole of the coal contract without any jurisdiction being permitted to the Commissioner to apportion some of the supplies to any new mine that may be discovered. Coal is the essence of commercial life. If we do not get it in Collie, we may get it nearer to Fremantle. I hope the Minister will look into the questions I have referred to, such as the covering of coal and the mixing of coal, and also that they will give the people at Wilga a fair chance of getting on their feet.

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.17]: I congratulate the Railway Department upon its improved financial position. If I may say so in all humility, I regret Parliament did not two years ago assist me in an endeavour to have the Estimates reduced by 10 per cent. The results have shown that it was quite possible for the Railway Department to have initiated economies which have since been brought into existence, and are being added to day by day. I sympathise with the Commissioner of Railways. We are paying him £2,000 a year for his services. I do not speak of him in a personal way for I have a great admiration for him. I believe he is doing his best to place the railways on a sound financial basis. We are paying him this salary to carry out the policy of the Government and this cramps him in one way. On the other hand, he is cramped by the awards of the Arbitration Court. It speaks volumes for him and his officers that they have been able to achieve such excellent results, despite these handicaps. I am not going to appear as a carping critic, but I do think the Railway Department should not continue to build island platforms in country towns. This system was inaugurated by Mr. J. T. Short. It is inconvenient for the people. In the country districts people have either to cross by an overhead bridge or go through a subway in order to reach the island platform, or they have to break the regulations and cross over the railway line. At Mount Barker the Government are spending £7,000 in the construction of a station. No provision is made there for means of access from the business side of the town to the railway. The people will in the future, as in the past, have to walk across the line or clamber over obstacles at night time in order to reach the platform. Many people have fallen into the engine pit whilst doing this.

The same thing happened at Katanning until the Railway Department filled in the pit. I hope the Railway Department will cut out these island platforms in the country districts. At Mount Barker the department is erecting a station on one side only, and there is no verandah on the opposite side.

The Minister for Mines: We are doing what you suggest.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is still an island platform.

The Minister for Mines: Mt. Barker has business people on both sides of the line.

Mr. A. THOMSON: All the business houses and hotels are on one side, and 90 per cent. of the people wishing to catch a train have either to cross the railway or drive round. The same thing applies at Tambellup, where there is an island platform. The bulk of the business people live on one side and they have to cross the line in order to catch a train. At night time this is a source of danger to them. I have had to clamber over trucks in order to reach the house of accommodation there. Island platforms in the country towns are a mistake and must be more expensive to work.

The Minister for Mines: They are not.

Mr. A. THOMSON: At all events, they are inconvenient for the public. We are endeavouring to foster our primary industries. Consideration should be given to building them up in the country districts. I refer particularly to flour mills. The Katanning miller had to carry on business in the metropolitan area because that was more adjacent to the port of export. The Narrogin flour mills had to do the same thing. It is the policy of every section of the community to foster a spirit of decentralisation. Some consideration should be paid to the necessity for giving those who are manufacturing commodities for export, such as flour, a cheaper freight on the railways to enable them to compete with the town millers. A large quantity of offal is consumed in the country districts. If we could encourage the gristing of flour in the country the Government would be taking a step in the right direction. Attention has been drawn by some of my constituents to the anomalies in the charges imposed by the Railway Department on what are called "smalls." If a person wishes to send a small parcel to a country district he can do so more cheaply by sending it through the post office. A parcel of approximately a pound in weight would cost about 1s. 9d. if it were sent through the Railway Department, but 1s. if sent through the post, railed to its destination, and delivered.

Mr. Latham: You can get it down to your district for 6d. through the post.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I may be erring on the side of safety.

Mr. Latham: Small parcels are cheaper sent through the post than by rail.

The Minister for Mines: Don't you understand why?

Mr. A. THOMSON: One can send parcels cheaper by post than by rail.

The Minister for Mines: You do not know why.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I know it is a fact that this anomaly exists.

The Minister for Mines: It is not an anomaly.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have here a receipt sent to me by one of my constituents. He had killed a calf and desired to sell the skin through Messrs. Elder, Smith & Company, at Fremantle. The total weight was 7lbs. 10ozs. He received 5s. 10d. for the skin. The commission amounted to 3d., the railage was 3s. 6d. and the cartage 3d., making a total of 4s., leaving a net return of 1s. 10d. In the ordinary circumstances this gentleman was lucky that he did not have to contribute something more to the Railway Department for freight.

The Minister for Mines: What are you proving by that?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I propose to prove that the charges on "smalls" are too high altogether. When the carriage of 7lbs. 10ozs. costs 3s. 6d. to be taken 240 miles, there is not much encouragement for those people who live in the country districts to give effect to that clarion call of the present Administration: "Go on the land, young man, and produce!"

The Minister for Mines: What does he produce?

Mr. A. THOMSON: A calf skin in this instance.

The Minister for Mines: You are getting as bad as Willmott; he brought in a dingo skin!

Mr. A. THOMSON: I congratulate the Minister on his hilarity.

The Minister for Mines: Why not get down to something that counts?

Mr. A. THOMSON: This sort of thing counts very materially with the people concerned. If a man is producing an article on the land—seeing that the Minister is so keen on splitting straws—surely he will recognise that the man is worthy of receiving some encouragement, and if he has to despatch an article worth 5s. 10d. over the railways and has to pay 3s. 6d. for that privilege, there is not much encouragement for him. If the Minister regards that as encouragement, then God help the small producer!

The Minister for Mines: Why did he not sell the skin to a local purchaser.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the case as it is.

Mr. Lutey: Are there local buyers nearer at hand?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Will any hon. member say that an article that is worth 5s. 10d. should be charged 3s. 6d. for conveyance over the railways? That charge surely is excessive.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It might not be excessive.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Well, it is no encouragement for any man to produce.

Mr. Hughes: If the railways had to handle parcels of one skin only, it would never pay.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is astonishing how metropolitan members fly to arms to defend the Government whenever these anomalies are referred to on behalf of the country people.

The Minister for Mines: It is not an anomaly at all.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is a gross overcharge.

Mr. Mann: You are making a bad case.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with facts. God help these men if 3s. 6d. is to be charged on an article worth 5s. 10d. This is how we are received when we bring up cases to show how men in the back country are treated by the railways.

The Minister for Mines: Instead of playing the piccolo, you should play the trombone!

Mr. A. THOMSON: Very well, I will bang the big drum now. I suppose I will be told, too, that the next case I will refer to is absurd. I suppose the Minister will make a joke of it.

Hon. P. Collier: He does not like it when you give him facts.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Evidently that is the position. I have another case from the same district.

Hon. P. Collier: They all come from Katanning! Is it an opossum skin now?

Mr. A. THOMSON: This again shows the anomalous treatment of people who are endeavouring to produce. One gentleman had 19 pigs to despatch from Kwohup. The railway freight to Midland Junction which was charged for trucking those pigs was £4 14s. 4d. After the train had come five miles nearer to Perth, two separate men had three pigs each which were put into the truck with the other 19 pigs. It will astonish the Committee to know that the Railway Department charged those two men £3 3s. 6d. each for their three pigs, or £1 1s. 2d. for each pig.

Mr. Mann: You could not expect the railways to take less than half a truck.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I congratulate the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) on his desire to protect the Government.

The Minister for Mines: It is not a question of protecting the Government. Suppose one of these men had desired to truck one pig.

Mr. Mann: I have trucked hundreds of pigs, and I know what I have had to pay.

Mr. Hughes: You got them through pretty cheaply, too.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I would like to see common sense applied to the railway working, if it is possible to get it. The significant part is that if these men had had a separate truck sent to them to lift their three pigs, the Railway Department would have charged only £3 3s. 6d. for the conveyance of those animals. Taking into consideration the fact that the truck was already occupied by 19 pigs, and that the other consignees had trucked their pigs from five miles nearer to Perth along the line, they should be encouraged and charged a smaller amount. If the rates charged

mean that those men were dealt with fairly, what hope have they of succeeding?

Mr. Hughes. Do you suggest that the 19 pigs were carried too dearly?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not.

Hon. P. Collier: It may have been that the 19 were undercharged for.

Mr. A. THOMSON: According to the rate book the railway officials have to charge £3 ls. 6d. for a small truck. These men had to pay 2s. extra as shunting charges into Midland Junction.

The Minister for Mines: Where do you say these pigs were consigned from?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Kwobrup, on the Nyabing line.

The Minister for Mines: Why did you not bring this matter before my notice?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I did. The department turned this matter down, and I took it up myself. According to the railway regulations, the officials say they were right. I say they were not. What I desire to see is that in similar circumstances common sense will be exercised, and that the officials will not stick strictly to the regulations.

Mr. Pickering: Provisions already exist to deal with that.

The Minister for Mines: If we are to do as you suggest, the railways will have a nice time!

Mr. A. THOMSON: There are capable officers employed in the Railway Department, and I have always found them willing to meet me to the extent that lies within their power.

Mr. Hughes: Would you let them fix a price on each separate consignment?

Mr. A. THOMSON: No, but where there is a truck of animals such as I have referred to, in respect of which the department has already been paid the full amount, I maintain that the other two consignees should not have been charged more than a third of the amount for the truck. Instead of that, they were charged an amount that worked out at 1d. per lb. If this sort of thing is to go on, what encouragement is it for people to go on the land to produce pigs?

Mr. Mann: The people you talk about could have sent 33 pigs for the same amount.

Mr. A. THOMSON: What a brilliant interjection! The poor devils only had three pigs each to send to market.

The Minister for Mines: You could not expect the Railway Department to send a truck for every individual pig.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If they send a truck for three pigs only, they will charge £3 3s. 6d., so why should there not be a cheaper rate for the smaller man?

The Minister for Mines: Should the Railway Department not be entitled to take all the other freight they can get?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Just so; but why penalise these smaller men?

The Minister for Mines: They are not penalised.

Mr. A. THOMSON: They are. We are spending millions on a policy of develop-

ment in the South-West, and one part of the scheme is to encourage dairying and pig raising. When will the average group settler be in a position to send forward 33 pigs?

The Minister for Mines: The group can send the consignment.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, they can combine and send the pigs forward.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is the point; they are not allowed to do that.

The Minister for Mines: They are.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Excuse me, that is wrong.

Mr. Pickering: Yes, that was stopped.

The Minister for Mines: Where the member for Katanning is referring to, they are allowed to do it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Here again is an anomaly! I am speaking from facts I have received from the settlers in the district. The railways insist that if stock is consigned on the railways to markets, they must be the property of the one man. This debar several people from consigning their stock forward in the name of one individual. The Commissioner in such a case has claimed that it is an evasion of the regulations when three or four men combine and say that the stock belongs to one man. Such an action is not in accord with the regulations, with the result that they cannot be forwarded. I am not speaking in an antagonistic vein against the Railway Department, but I want to voice my objection to this method of doing things. Common sense should prevail instead of officers sticking strictly to the regulations. Here we are spending millions of pounds in developing group settlements in the South-West, and yet this is the position that small growers find themselves in. It has been stated that the settler can sell his pigs or stock to some agent. Why should not half a dozen men combine and forward their stock together as a full truck? Why should they be compelled to send their stock in their own name as the one consignee and the sole owner of the stock?

Mr. Harrison: They must be consigned by the one consignee.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, and the railways insist that the stock shall be the property of the one owner.

The Minister for Works: Who would sort out the pigs?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The regulations should be amended so as to assist the group settlers and encourage stock raising. I will draw a somewhat odious comparison. When I was returned to this Chamber in 1914, certain people in one part of my electorate wrote to me and stated that for years they had been urging the Railway Department to have a set of scales installed at their siding. They are in the unfortunate position of having to accept the railway weights. The commodities are weighed at Fremantle or Albany and there is often a considerable discrepancy between the two.

The Minister for Mines: We take weights for our own purposes only.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I understand that, but on the larger railway stations the department have provided weighing machines where wagons and carts may be weighed.

The Minister for Mines: And we charge for it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes.

The Minister for Mines: We have the business there and can make it pay.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Since 1914 these people have been requesting the Commissioner of Railways to provide a small set of scales, in order that they might take weights both in and out. The department say it is absolutely impossible; as a matter of fact they do not approve of it.

The Minister for Mines: That is absolutely incorrect. We provide scales where the people undertake the responsibility.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Then I shall read a letter to show that my statement is not incorrect:—

8th August, 1923. With further reference to your letter of 3rd July as to platform scales at Muradup, I would be very pleased to send a set of scales if I could have found one which I could have sent without any undue fuss; but I should have to buy a new set for Muradup and if I did that I should have to make similar provision for probably about 200 other unattended sidings of the same kind. We look upon the provision of scales at unattended sidings with very little favour, because firstly the damage done to them is so excessive and secondly, the weights are very nearly always taken away a few days after they are supplied. I cannot find any reason why any exception should be made in the case of this particular siding, though without doubt your representations would entitle it to special consideration if anything would.—H. Pope, Commissioner of Railways.

The Minister for Mines: At an unattended siding!

Mr. A. THOMSON: Broomehill has been made an unattended siding and I venture to say a set of scales may still be found there. The same applies to Woodanilling. The department have no money to provide these requirements for people who are developing the country and providing traffic for the railways, but they could find £7,000 for new buildings at the Mt. Barker station.

The Minister for Mines: That is the sore point.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am merely drawing a comparison.

The Minister for Mines: It took you a long time to come to the comparison.

Mr. Johnston: It would be better to spend the money on weighbridges.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Facilities ought to be provided for the settlers. The people of the Katanning district consider that the season for excursion rates is not sufficiently long.

The Minister for Mines: Excursion rates are granted all the year round.

Mr. A. THOMSON: They are not.

The Minister for Mines: As affecting settlers, they are.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The people desire that the period of summer excursions be extended and I think they have a right to ask it. The request, however, has been refused. The Minister is not worrying about the future administration or what the people in the Albany district may desire. He is finishing up this year; he is not troubling. I am pleased that the department is showing better results. Despite the Minister's hilarity I think my suggestions should receive earnest consideration. The Minister said no reductions would be made except to people outback. We have erected freezing works at Fremantle, towards the cost of which the State has advanced money. If we are going to compete overseas, we shall have to draw supplies not only from land adjacent to the works, but from distant parts of the country. The department should consider the question of providing special rates for lambs for export.

Hon. P. Collier: No other portion of the State is more favourably situated than the Great Southern.

Mr. A. THOMSON: A producer situated 200 or 300 miles from Fremantle is in an inferior position to a man situated at Northam.

The Minister for Mines: Do you suggest a flat rate?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, for export lambs.

Hon. P. Collier: Then why not for every commodity for export?

Mr. A. THOMSON: That practically applies to-day; we have the zone system for wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not a flat rate.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If we are going to foster the production of lambs, growers must be put on the same footing. We are not in a position to establish freezing works at the outports, because the country is not producing sufficient lambs. I think my suggestions are in the interests of land settlement and decentralisation.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [5.56]: Some time ago a deputation representing various local governing bodies in the metropolitan area waited on the Minister and requested a reduction in railway fares. The Minister listened patiently to what they had to say, but stated he could not see his way clear to recommend any reduction. He, however, promised to consider the question of reducing the price of workers' tickets. When the Minister was introducing his Estimates he made no reference to this matter. The fares at present charged on the railways are causing the suburbs to be depleted of their best residents. People are moving into the city; I know of several cases.

The Minister for Mines: And I know of as many that have gone out to the suburbs.

Mr. DAVIES: That is due to the increase in the population of the metropolitan area.

The high fares are causing a depletion of suburban population, but there is a more serious aspect, namely, the competition of motor buses.

Hon. P. Collier: There is also the question of overcrowding the city.

Mr. DAVIES: Yes. The railways are subject to very keen competition by motor buses for passenger traffic. To reduce the railway fares in the metropolitan area by only 10 per cent. would mean a loss to the department of £20,000 a year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The general taxpayer has to maintain the roads for the motors.

Mr. DAVIES: Yes. The department, by continuing to charge high railway fares, are encouraging motor traffic to the detriment of the roads and the revenue of the local authorities.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: A higher charge should be made for motors.

Mr. DAVIES: The department should remember that the motor bus competition is not likely to diminish; rather is it likely to increase. There is only one way in which the department can meet this competition.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: To travel from Fremantle to Perth by motor bus is 4d. less than by rail.

Mr. DAVIES: And the motors pick up people at their doors, whereas one often has to walk half a mile to a railway station.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not know that the motors pick up people at their doors.

Mr. DAVIES: The only way in which the department can compete is by reducing fares.

Mr. Clydesdale: And by extending the tramway system.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where there are no railways.

Mr. DAVIES: With tramway construction costing £10,000 a mile, it is not possible to extend the system very much. I only hope that the cost of tramway construction will come down considerably, so that our tramway system may be extended. I am looking forward to the construction of tramways in my own area. At present, however, there is no possibility of that. I appeal to the Minister to go once more into the question of workers' fares. Many men residing in the suburbs are employed in the city. On the occasion when a deputation waited on him in this connection, the Minister admitted to the representatives of the local governing bodies that there was some justification for the claims submitted in behalf of working men. If the matter has not yet been given consideration, I hope the Minister will, before leaving office, go thoroughly into the matter and see whether some reduction cannot be granted. Throughout the metropolitan area the housing question is most serious, and the Government should do their utmost to encourage families to reside in the outer suburbs, even if the bread-winners have to travel into the city. Should the adoption of this suggestion involve some loss at the present juncture, still, that loss will be more than repaid by the assistance rendered towards the solution of the housing problem.

The Minister for Mines: You suggest nothing but losses. You never show how profits can be made.

Mr. DAVIES: I have no desire to make any suggestion which would hurt members on the Cross benches; but as a railway man let me say that there is only one way of meeting the loss from the competition of motor buses in the metropolitan area, and that is to make up the loss by increasing rates on traffic which cannot be carried by motor buses. The experts in the Railway Department are good men at running railways, but I am not sure that they have taken sufficient notice of the competition of the motor buses.

Mr. Marshall: Can you name one country in the world where railways are competing successfully against motor buses over short distances?

Mr. DAVIES: I cannot.

Mr. Marshall: And you never will be able to.

Mr. DAVIES: I understand that large motor buses are now being prepared in the local garages to run between Perth and Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are eight already on the road.

Mr. DAVIES: Yes, and larger ones are being prepared.

Hon. P. Collier: Are not there one or two motor buses running out to Belmont and Bayswater?

Mr. DAVIES: One or two to Bayswater.

Mr. Corboy: The fleet is being increased every week.

Mr. Clydesdale: That will be remedied when the trams have been extended.

Mr. DAVIES: I would suggest that the local governing bodies and the railway authorities should confer for the purpose of watching the interests of the State enterprise, the railway system. Once more I urge the Minister to give consideration to the case of men living in the outer suburbs and working in the city, who are now being charged fares that are altogether too heavy.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [6.7]: I desire to compliment the Minister, and through him the Commissioner, on the improvement in this year's railway finances. I had hoped that the Minister, in introducing his Estimates, would announce a reduction of freights, especially for the residents of the remote parts of the State. Everyone knows that increases in railway freights impose great hardship on the people outback. Such increases cause demands on the mining companies for higher wages, and render still heavier the burden on outback residents. The last time freights were raised, we were told that the reason was the increases granted to railway employees. Now that the Arbitration Court has reduced those rates in the aggregate by £20,000, users of the railways, especially remote users, naturally expect some benefit. The Commissioner reports that the loss on the system for the last financial year was £62,000, or lower by

£195,000 than the loss for 1921-22. The figures prove a fair increase in the revenue and some decrease in the expenditure. The expenditure for 1922-23 was less by £118,000 than that for the previous financial year, and the train mileage last year was smaller by 59,332 miles than that run during the previous year. As there has been a considerable increase in train loads, the results from railway working have improved. In cost of maintenance a reduction of £44,000 is shown. I hope that reduction has not been secured at the expense of the efficiency of the system. Outback we know that all the railway gangs are now using motor trolleys. That fact represents a substantial improvement, and affords an opportunity for the gangs to be taken to their work and brought back from it much more quickly. Moreover, the use of trolleys has enabled the length of line allotted to each gang to be increased. I repeat that I hope the reduction in maintenance costs has not affected the safe running of the railways. I hope also that repairs to rolling stock have not been starved. Subject to these reservations, the reduction in maintenance costs is something to compliment the Commissioner upon. A reduction in freights outback would mean greater opportunities for mining companies to develop low-grade propositions. It would also enable the people outback to exist. Latterly the population in remote parts of the State has been declining, chiefly for the reason that under existing conditions it is impossible to work low-grade mines. Increased railway freights have been a burden to the workers outback as well as to the mining companies. Mining machinery, and especially such machinery as is used for development purposes, should be carried at the same rate as superphosphate. Superphosphate is necessary for the farmer, and mining machinery is necessary for mining companies. We know that in many cases a mining company's only chance of obtaining up to date plant is represented by a reduction in railway freights. Wiluna, we are told, requires £300,000 worth of mining machinery. A reduction in railway freights would therefore represent something considerable to Wiluna. I have always looked upon our railway system as an instrument of development. The people outback must be encouraged to produce in order that the people in the metropolitan district may live. The people outback should be enabled to bring their products to market as cheaply as possible. No doubt a reduction in freights will mean a deficiency on the running of the railways. I have always been an advocate of a tax on the unimproved value of land, and I have urged that the products of such a tax should be earmarked for the benefit of the Railway Department. In that way railway freights could be reduced and the people outback benefited. Under existing conditions, the further out one goes, the more one is penalised. Alongside our existing railways there are huge areas utterly unused. I would tax people holding land merely for speculative

purposes. Indeed, I would tax them out of existence. They are of no use to the State. The result of a tax on the unimproved value of land would be to bring an enormous additional area under cultivation, and consequently an enormous increase in the goods traffic of the Railway Department, which would thus be made a payable proposition. At present the city dwellers pay practically nothing by way of railway freights towards the upkeep of the railway system. Practically all imported goods are landed at Fremantle, and then brought up to Perth by motor lorry. The importers sell the goods to the country storekeepers, who pay the rail freight and pass it on to the outback consumer. Thus the outback consumer is the man who practically pays for the upkeep of the railway system. The imposition of a tax on the unimproved value of land would mean that the whole of our people would contribute towards that upkeep.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. CHESSON: Before the tea adjournment I was complaining about the heavy imposts on the people outback owing to the charges levied by the Railway Department and was advocating a system of land values taxation under which a proportion would be earmarked as a contribution towards railway earnings, thus reducing the freight chargeable to the users of the railways. Under such a system the people of the metropolitan area would pay a proportion of the cost of running the railways, and thus help to relieve the burden on the people in the remote areas. As it is at present, we know that those who use the railways have to pay for them. This matter has been before the House on several occasions and there is no need for me to stress it further. Regarding the freight on stock, the producers in the Murchison should receive greater consideration, particularly during the summer months. If a through train were provided, so that stock could be travelled direct from the Murchison to the metropolitan market without any stoppages except for water, it would be a humane move. In addition it would give the producers an opportunity to avail themselves of the early market. At the present time delays along the line mean that that market is lost to the growers. If that matter were attended to it would be of advantage to the people despatching the stock and to those who purchase it here. There is another matter I regard as pure vandalism on the part of the Railway Department. At various stations in the Murchison district we find that the iron roofs of stations and buildings—they are built of stone—have been removed, together with doors and windows, thus leaving the buildings exposed to the weather. At Lake Austin the whole of the sheds have been stripped and the same applies to the dwellings. At Day Dawn, too, the buildings have been treated in a similar way, although no difficulty would be found in letting them, as plenty of tenants are available. An enormous

amount of material has been freighted from Day Dawn, and about 12 months ago the seates were shifted from the station. In consequence many disputes have arisen in connection with material sent through to Gwalia, where mining developments have taken place. An enormous amount has been freighted down to Fremantle, too, but there is no opportunity for the people to weigh their goods. This has meant that disputes have arisen and matters have had to be adjusted. This was a mistake. Although the station is now an unattended siding, there has been more material shifted from Day Dawn than from most other centres up there, and nearly as much as from Cue. Much has been said regarding the Collie coal contract. It seems extraordinary that the Commissioner should take it upon himself to arrange such a contract without consulting the Minister. The contract was fixed up for a period of three years, despite the fact that there is every indication that there will be a fall in the price of coal before that period expires. I take it the Commissioner is an ordinary human being who desires to get on with his Minister. In view of that fact, it is strange that he took this action without consulting his Ministerial head. There should be some explanation from the Commissioner as to why he committed the department to the contract. There is the probability that good coal mines will be developed at Wilga and at Irwin. In the Murchison district we are interested in the development of the Irwin field, for it will mean much to our part of the State. One bore was put down and fairly large seams of coal were cut. One bore will not prove a seam. I have had a good deal of experience in connection with coal mining and I know it is possible to put down a bore and strike a fault where the coal is of a low calorific value. Sometimes when three or four seams are struck, one may be good and the others may be poorer or better. The development of a good coal find at Irwin would be of great advantage to the State and to the railways. I compliment the Commissioner and the Minister on the improvement in the railway finances. I hope that in the near future this will lead to a reduction in passenger fares and ordinary freights, particularly where the more remote parts of the State are concerned.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [7.41]: I congratulate the Minister on the improvement in the railway finances. I would like to remind him that when I asked him a question last year regarding the railway crossing at Melbourne-road, his answer was that when the finances improved something might be done. I am wondering if it is possible for him to say whether we are getting towards the stage when something will be done.

The Minister for Mines: I cannot give any promise now as I would be committing my successor.

Mrs. COWAN: The crossing there is a particularly dangerous one and it would be a matter of satisfaction to the public, even though the Minister intends to retire from

politics, if he would give an assurance that something will be done.

The Minister for Works: The money was voted and the land resumed years ago, so why has not something been done?

Mrs. COWAN: I was glad to hear the Minister announce that a reduction had been made in the freights for fruit. That is a wise move. I am sure an advantage will be reaped by the Commissioner as well as by the people in the metropolitan area. Cheap fruit is necessary for the children in particular and for the public in general during the summer months and I commend the Commissioner and the Minister for this relief.

Mr. MARSHALL (Murchison) [7.43]: After listening to previous speakers, I venture to voice the grievances of my district with some degree of fear. We have heard a good deal concerning the harsh treatment certain people have received from the Railway Department and no doubt those grievances are justified. Perhaps those matters were rather small! I was almost prompted to make a suggestion to the Minister to avoid all future anomalies in connection with our railway system. It has been proposed that we should do away with steam power and replace it with electricity. The present Minister may yet be Minister for Railways to see this reform eventuate. I have a suggestion to make to him. It is that when he installs electricity on the railways he will create a large number of miniature railways and give every man in the State a little line of his own. That would overcome all existing anomalies and preclude all further complaints. Almost every speaker has complimented the Commissioner on the improvement in the railway finances. With all credit to the Commissioner for having done his best, I cannot say the economies effected appear to me to be altogether good. From the Commissioner's report we find that £43,301 has been saved in the maintenance of the system. That appears to be very good; but immediately afterwards the Commissioner turns to belated repairs. I rather think the Commissioner has been studying the Labour Party's platform.

Mr. Latham: He must have a lot of time on his hands.

Mr. MARSHALL: Not nearly so much as the hon. member has. If the Commissioner has been studying the Labour Party's platform he will have noticed that it contains a plank entitled "Ministerial control" and, like so many others, anticipating a change next March he is keeping that plank in view. The Commissioner in his report says that re-ballasting of the main line between Chidlow and Northam, and Perth and Bunbury is necessary, the original ironstone ballast having become powdered and dirty. Then he says that re-fishplating between Spencer's Brook and Beverley is also necessary, the worn fishplates leading to rough and uneven running and so injuring the rail joints. He adds that during the year the

nine miles of track between Donnybrook and Bridgetown, which was the worst, has been attended to. So the whole of the belated repairs attended to in 12 months do not average one mile per month! The Commissioner says he has been late in doing certain classes of repairs, and he sets out those classes, and the amount of work he has done. He claims to have achieved a great deal in that he has saved £43,301. But if he has economised at the expense of the system, it is not good economy.

The Minister for Railways: He has not done that.

Mr. MARSHALL: But his own report proves it. He says these belated repairs should have been attended to, but that he has neglected them and so saved £43,301. That is carefully set out in the Commissioner's report. Some invention for re-dogging, I hope a good one, has been adopted. A compound discovered by an engineer in the railway system is used for filling up the old dog hole, so permitting of re-dogging in the same hole without shifting the sleeper. If that compound proves to be good, the department and the taxpayers owe the discoverer a great deal; because it will go far towards economising in the maintenance of the system. However, we notice from the report that it has not had a very long trial. Probably in March next the Labour Party will be again in the same unfortunate position as it was in 1911, when it had to find half a million of money in order to bring the rolling stock and railway system generally up to standard. I am taking the Commissioner's own statement when I say the permanent way is sorely in need of repair as the result of the Commissioner's so-called economies. I do not profess to be competent to give a decision as to whether a railway track is safe for traffic, but I am prepared to take the Commissioner's own words when he says that during the year he has attended to only nine miles of track, or less than one mile per month. I will reserve my congratulations to the Commissioner for a future date. Should things pan out as predicted by the Minister when introducing the Estimates, I will be perfectly willing to congratulate, not only the Commissioner, but all his officers. First of all, however, I want to see that the economies practised have been valid, and will not lead to additional expense. We have competent officers looking after the maintenance, but I really believe that if the road were as bad as some critics say, it would have been attended to.

Mr. Davies: What does the Commissioner say about the road generally?

Mr. MARSHALL: That does not matter. He has referred to certain repairs that ought to have been effected. I notice also from the report that the Commissioner has got through the year with 335 men fewer than he had last year. Yet I understand the traffic has been as great this year as it was in the previous year. Therefore, if it took

a given number of men to maintain the system in 1922, the same number of men should have been required last year. It is apparent that the retrenchment has been made amongst the men employed in the maintenance of the permanent way.

Mr. Davies: Oh, no.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the hon. member peruses the Commissioner's report he will find that the salaried officers have had increases to the extent of £6,000.

The Minister for Mines: As I have already explained, that was because we transferred a number of men from the wages staff to the salaried staff.

Mr. MARSHALL: On the other hand the wages men have been cut down by £122,673. The only men to suffer by retrenchment have been the wages men, those men who have been employed principally in maintaining the roads. It bears out the contention that the Commissioner has economised at the cost of the permanent way, and so his economies are not so valuable as some hon. members think. If, after all, the Commissioner's neglect of the belated repairs does not bring trouble on the railway system, and if in the end the belated repairs can be attended to without increase in cost, then the Commissioner will deserve our congratulations. Recently there was a shortage of rolling stock for transporting cattle from Meekatharra to Midland Junction. Wires were sent to Geraldton in the hope that sufficient trucks would be available. I admit there was much stock in transit at the time, and probably the whole of the trucks were in use. Anyhow one party had to send his stock overland to Minginew. This does not speak well for the department, although I admit there was a heavy demand for trucks at the time. The cattle had been brought from the North-West and for only a percentage could the department supply trucks. The poorer animals had to be culled out and overlanded. We have been told that economies are being effected in the department, but if they are to be made at the expense of customers and of the taxpayers, I for one shall be chary about complimenting the department. It means a heavy handicap to growers when stock, on reaching the railhead, cannot be accommodated and has to be sent on by road.

Mr. Underwood: There are only certain times of the year when they can travel their livestock.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. The drovers told me they had lost two or three weeks waiting for the department to furnish sufficient trucks to transport portion of the stock. I shall appreciate economy in the department when it comes.

The Minister for Mines: But it is here.

Mr. MARSHALL: I shall require a practical demonstration of it before I shall be satisfied. The Minister should endeavour to facilitate the transportation of stock from Meekatharra. I understand it is the practice to run one engine from Northam to Mullewa

or even further. The system, known as pooling, consists of sending the engine right through the journey, but under various reliefs of enginesmen, and it necessitates longer stops because of the need for cleaning the fires. Where these long stops are made, there are no facilities for untrucking stock. At Koola-anooka it was found that two head of cattle had fallen in the trucks. At the next stop the man in charge tried to get the beasts on their feet. There were no facilities available and, when he opened the door, two bullocks leaped out. There was no hope of re-trucking them even if they could have been caught, and this represented a dead loss to the owner. The department should endeavour to provide cattle races along the line so that, when cattle fall down, facilities might be available to get them on their feet again. The dumb animal is entitled to some consideration and the department should show some concern for the interests of stock raisers. By so doing they would be studying the interests of the people of the metropolitan area.

Mr. Underwood: They are the ones to be mainly studied!

Mr. MARSHALL: All sections of the community deserve fair consideration. We cannot expect people to engage in stock raising 700 miles or more inland if the department mishandle their stock on the way to market. I believe that eventually the greater proportion of beef and mutton produced in the State will be grown in the North-West.

Mr. Pickering: That is not so to-day.

Mr. MARSHALL: No. All the land of value in the South-West will ultimately be required for closer settlement purposes.

Mr. Pickering: But settlers in the South-West will run sheep.

Mr. MARSHALL: Only in a small way. I doubt whether they will run sufficient to supply the local market. I would remind the member for Sussex, however, that the wool and meat growers of the Murchison enjoy no cheap freights for windmills, tanks, troughing and wire-netting.

Mr. Pickering: Due to the fact that the railways have to haul empty trucks so far.

Mr. MARSHALL: It is due to the fact that certain people are holding up vast areas of land unjustly, areas that they cannot work.

Mr. Money: There is plenty vacant, is there not?

Mr. MARSHALL: Land is not the only thing that is vacant.

Mr. Money: Time will falsify your prophecy.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then I shall not feel annoyed. A matter that calls for attention at the hands of the Commissioner of Railways is the more humane treatment in the transportation of stock. Much has been achieved during the last 12 months in the way that stock from Meekatharra to the metropolitan area has been handled. I asked certain questions about this matter, and am pleased to say that the answers show an improvement in the position. The length of time occupied in bringing a stock train from Meekatharra to

Midland Junction has been reduced by six or eight hours. The Minister states that a special stock train from Meekatharra to Northam now takes 41½ hours on the average to reach the latter place. That is not bad. I cannot, however, see why stock cannot be brought through as rapidly as the passenger trains travel. I understand the chief reason for this is the grades and the tonnage hauled on the special train. Is that correct?

The Minister for Mines: I am not doubting it.

Mr. MARSHALL: The travelling time has been reduced six or eight hours within 12 months, and that in itself is a substantial reform. Some years ago it took a train 50 hours to travel from Meekatharra to Midland Junction. I congratulate the railways upon their energy and efficiency, but they cannot afford to mark-time in this respect or they may retrogress. The chief difficulty in the way of more rapid transit of stock is the lack of haulage power. A special train is made up to the full tonnage, and could not drag more stock over the existing grades. Except for the expense, there is nothing to prevent the department from attaching more power to the special trains. This might cost £1,500 or £2,000 a year, but would quicken up the time now occupied in bringing stock to the metropolitan area. If one section of the community can receive concessions at the hands of the department it is not too much to ask it to give increased power on the special stock trains for the benefit of another section of the community. If the member for Katanning was justified in asking for a rebate on one calf skin, I am quite justified in asking for this concession, which would give the metropolitan area cheaper beef and mutton, and the outback growers a greater opportunity to get more remuneration from their stock. It has been suggested that people in the metropolitan area should be blessed with a further reduction in fares. I would like to know the difference between the privileges given to the holder of a quarterly season ticket and those given to the holder of a workers' ticket. Is the holder of the latter entitled to travel to other than the station that takes him to his work?

Mr. Davies: No.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then there is a distinction between them. If anyone should get the concession of reduced freights and fares, it should not be the metropolitan people.

Mr. Underwood: Why?

Mr. MARSHALL: For several reasons.

The Minister for Mines: One will do.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the people of the metropolitan area were awake to their own welfare they would realise that the giving of cheap freights and fares to those engaged in our primary industries would beneficially affect the city. The member for Guildford complains about the exorbitant railway fares in the metropolitan area and suggests a reduction. He argued that these exorbitant fares were driving people into the country.

Mr. Davies: Not encouraging them to go to the suburbs.

Mr. MARSHALL: If cheap fares and various form of recreation are provided in the city, that is an inducement for people in the country to come here. If the railways can afford any reduction in freights or fares, they should be given to country people.

The Minister for Mines: Our executive will endorse your candidature.

Mr. Clydesdale: Nearly everybody in the country has a motor car.

Mr. MARSHALL: People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The Minister has but a brief political career before him, and should whisper into the ear of his probable successor that if anyone should get concessions on the railways it should be the country people.

The Minister for Mines: Why not take it on yourself?

Mr. MARSHALL: I have no desire to speak disparagingly of the city people, but it is only human nature for people to flock to where they can get the most comforts. I agree that the workers in the metropolitan area should have cheap tickets. I wonder if the Minister has given any further consideration to the proposal to enable the relatives of the patients in the Wooroloo Sanatorium to get cheap railway fares to that place.

The Minister for Mines: The member for Kalgoorlie knows all about it.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister should have given us some information on the point. However, he overlooked the matter. Perhaps he may refer to it in replying. The necessity for adopting the suggestion is obvious. The bread-winner of a goldfields family, who is suffering from a hopeless complaint, must leave his home and is separated from his people by hundreds of miles. Because of the distance of Wooroloo from the goldfields, the wife and children are unable to visit him. A concession in this respect has already been granted to metropolitan friends of Wooroloo patients. I protest against the railway freights on mining requisites, such, for instance, as are used by prospectors. Members opposite who support the Government are able to extract from the Cabinet of the day many concessions on the plea of assisting the struggling pioneer. I do not disparage that idea. The struggling farmer or the struggling pastoralist or the struggling miner will alike have my assistance. But if one section of pioneers get concessions, other sections should get them.

Mr. Underwood: How much railway freight is there on a prospector's outfit?

Mr. MARSHALL: A very mean sum.

Mr. Underwood: If you abolish the freight, that would not count for much.

Mr. MARSHALL: No.

Mr. Underwood: It would not help the prospector.

Mr. MARSHALL: But it would encourage the prospector. I can quote instances where the railway freight on pumps and donkey boilers has been so exorbitant that the prospector has let his show go rather than pay the freight. The cost of moving a boiler to the point where the prospector is working

often amounts to more than the cost of the boiler itself. We do not know how much the State loses from this cause. Every section of pioneers should be treated alike in the matter of concessions. There are struggling pioneers on the pastoral areas in my electorate. Settlers in the South-West, subject to giving six months' notice, can get special railway rates on troughing, windmills, wire, wire netting, and similar commodities for the development of their holdings. But no such concession is obtainable for the settler 500 or 600 miles inland who requires those commodities. I do not argue that the concession should be taken away from the south-western settler, but I do contend that it should be granted to all pioneers. The Minister for Agriculture is in favour of my suggestion—I don't think. I understand that the Minister for Railways will submit the Tramway Estimates separately, and therefore I reserve my remarks on the all-important tramway system of the metropolitan area. In sweet anticipation I shall continue to look forward to the realisation of the efficient and economical working of our railway system, as foreshadowed in the Commissioner's report, until it is proved beyond doubt that no risk is being run.

The Minister for Mines: Why not take my assurance in advance?

Mr. MARSHALL: I know of one party who took the Minister's assurance and has been somewhat disappointed. I shall wait to see how the anticipations in the Commissioner's report work out in actual results.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [8.39]: I greatly regret that my colleague from Meekatharra (Mr. Marshall) should join with the Praetorian guards on the cross-benches in an attack on the metropolitan area. A reference to the railway rate book shows that the capital of the electorate which is fortunate enough to return the hon. member is distant from Perth, by one route, 624 miles, and that the fare per mile is 1.2d. The rate from East Perth to Perth, however, is 3d. per mile. On those figures fares in the metropolitan area are three times as high as fares in the back country. I do not complain about fares in the metropolitan area. If people want a railway service, they should pay the cost of it. All Government services, economically run, should have a small working margin of profit. No section of the community should kick up a row about paying a reasonable fee for services rendered. However, in the matter of railway fares the member for Murchison has no grievance. It is gratifying to those who pay such high railway fares to know that we are approaching a time when the railway revenue will come somewhere near the railway expenditure. I do not agree, however, that the Railway Department should not show a handsome profit. On railway working for the last financial year there was a gross profit of £675,000. The interest bill was £766,000, and sinking fund mopped up £126,000. Thus interest and sinking fund together absorbed

£892,000. These charges resulted in a deficit on railway working of £216,000—more than half the deficit of the State. Obviously, when the revenue of a concern is not meeting the expenditure, either the expenditure is too high or the revenue is too low. An analysis of the revenue figures of the Railway Department clearly indicates that railway rates are too low. The department are being obliged to perform services for which they do not receive adequate remuneration. According to the Commissioner's tabulated list of ton-mileage for the last financial year, the average freight per ton per mile is 2.02d. The rate for superphosphate is 53d. or 25 per cent. of the average rate. The railways were compelled to carry 15,732,837 ton-miles of superphosphate at a loss, on normal freight, of £98,000.

Mr. Money: In New Zealand superphosphate is carried free. It makes the wheat tonnage ten times heavier.

Mr. Clydesdale: In South Australia the farmers have to pay more for the carriage of wheat.

Mr. HUGHES: This House is not concerned about the railway system of New Zealand. Many of us worry about what is going on in Russia, China, or New Zealand, while deficit records are being established here. We have enough to do with worrying about our own railways, which are asked to carry nearly 16 million ton-miles of superphosphate at 25 per cent. of the average rate.

Mr. Harrison: It is easy to see you do not get your living from the soil, though you are fat.

Mr. HUGHES: It is very easy to see the hon. member interjecting has done very well out of the soil and cheap railway freights.

Mr. Harrison: We deserve to do better, too.

Mr. HUGHES: Probably the hon. member thinks his freight should be carried for nothing, and even then he would have the audacity to come to this House and complain about the Railway Department showing a deficit.

Mr. Pickering: Do you favour cheaper railway fares for the city?

Mr. HUGHES: No. I believe the residents of the metropolitan area should pay, and are willing to pay, for the public services they receive. That is the only maxim on which such services can be rendered. But here we have an instance in which the Railway Department have had to give the farmers a concession of £98,000 in one year on superphosphate alone.

Hon. P. Collier: And at that time they were getting a record price.

Mr. HUGHES: A perusal of the charges that the railways received shows that the next lowest item refers to wheat, which stands at 1.12d. There was a concession of 50 per cent. allowed for the carriage of wheat, which means that the Railway Department received only 50 per cent. of the average rate for the wheat they carried. Last year the wheat railled represented 40,000,000 ton miles, which means that the concession to the

farmers amounted to £135,000 or, taking superphosphates into consideration as well, a total of £233,000. That sum represents £17,000 more than the total railway deficit! If the railways are compelled to give such a concession to the farmers in one year, I ask members sitting on the cross benches how they can expect the railways to pay? It may be said that it is necessary to farmers. I agree with that.

Mr. Harrison: You don't know much about railway running!

Hon. P. Collier: That is a very wise interjection!

The Minister for Mines: But is this an announcement of your railway policy?

Hon. P. Collier: The member for Avon will have a chance to reply.

Mr. HUGHES: I am prepared to go before my constituents and stand or fall by the statements I am making.

The Minister for Mines: That is not enough. If you are going to force the Government to do this, you will come a crash.

Mr. HUGHES: I will invite the hon. member to come to my constituency as his own seat is not too safe.

Mr. Pickering: No chance!

Mr. HUGHES: The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) is pretty groggy in his electorate, so he can come to East Perth, too, if he thinks it is a soft snap. Let him come and tell the railway men they have to work for so much less.

The CHAIRMAN: What has this to do with the railways?

Mr. HUGHES: If the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) disputes my statements, he can show where my figures are not correct. It will be generally conceded that it is necessary to assist the farmers. We want to increase agricultural production in Western Australia, and no Government has done so much for the farmers as the Labour Party. When times were bad and when the State was suffering from drought, the Labour Party enlarged the scope of the Agricultural Bank, established the Industries Assistance Board, and saved the agricultural industry. No concession the State can grant to the struggling farmer is too much. I have no objection to the railways carrying superphosphate free for the struggling farmers, but I object to a concession that applies to rich and poor alike. The wealthy farmer with an enormous income is allowed the same consideration as the struggling farmer. It is usual for Country Party members to contend that all farmers are struggling. The figures prepared by the Commissioner of Taxation make interesting reading on this point. In 1922 the average taxable income earned by the farmers was £488, or over £9 per week. On the other hand, the average taxable income earned by the salaried and wages men was £232. Thus the average taxable income earned by the farmer was twice as much as the average income of the salaried and wages men. In 1923 the average taxable income of the salaried and wages men had been decreased by £5 per year, making the average

income £224. What was the position with the farmer? Was his average income decreased? We find that the average income of the farmer had increased to £650.

The Minister for Mines: Moral, become a farmer!

Mr. HUGHES: If the Minister will throw open some land I will go on it.

The Minister for Mines: I would throw up enough for you to go on.

Mr. HUGHES: What a paltry reply! After putting up a case for concessions to the farmers, and it is shown that there is no necessity for that concession, the obvious reply is: "Become a farmer." Someone will say: "Become a motor salesman."

The Minister for Mines: We cannot all do that.

Mr. HUGHES: But we can all be farmers.

The Minister for Mines: I do not suggest that you could.

Mr. HUGHES: It is obvious that the Minister did not think that he could.

The Minister for Mines: Quite true. That is the difference between us. I know my own limitations.

Mr. HUGHES: There is no difference between us. I realise your limitations as well as you do. In 12 months the average income of the farmer increased by £162, or an increase of nearly £3 per week, while the other section I referred to had decreased by £8 per year.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do those figures refer to all farmers, or to pastoralists as well?

Mr. HUGHES: I am speaking of the farmers only.

Hon. P. Collier: The pastoralists are at the top of the list.

Mr. HUGHES: The average taxable income of the pastoralist was £3,177. I have shown, therefore, that the average taxable income of the farmers is over £12 10s. per week.

Mr. Money: That is all for the benefit of the State. If you did not have taxable incomes, where would the tax come from?

Hon. P. Collier: But it shows that the farmers are not hard up.

Mr. HUGHES: Does the member for Bunbury (Mr. Money) suggest that it would be beneficial to the State to give people whose average income is £12 10s. per week further concessions in connection with railway freights.

Mr. Money: But you give it under the heading of "A," and take it back under the heading of "B."

Mr. HUGHES: We do not take too much when there is an income of £12 10s. per week and an increase of £3 in one year. I do not contend that all farmers are wealthy or even well off, but when the average taxable income is so high, there must be a large number of wealthy farmers in Western Australia. When the State has assisted men over the struggling period, provided railway concessions and the advantages of the Agricultural Bank, the In-

dustries Assistance Board and the thousand and one other considerations, until the struggling stage is passed, it is only fair to the rest of the State that the farmers should pay a reasonable and fair railway freight on their goods. I believe that the wealthy farmer who has become fairly established, would be willing to accept his share of the railway burden confronting the State.

The Minister for Mines: Would you provide a sliding scale to apply to each farmer's income?

Mr. HUGHES: I would not. The Minister would very easily get over this difficulty if he desired to do so. There is another point to be considered. The bigger the farm, the more superphosphate is required and the bigger becomes the concession.

Mr. Harrison: And more produce for the next year.

The Minister for Mines: And more freight.

Mr. HUGHES: And the bigger the profit.

Hon. P. Collier: And the bigger the loss to the railways.

Mr. HUGHES: The concession to the small farmer is only a small one, but the man who is farming in a big way gets a big concession. This means that the policy we are adopting to-day in connection with the agricultural industry is one to help the big farmer under the guise of assisting the small man. It will be suggested that there is no way out of it. There are a dozen and one ways out of it. I would make these people pay a legitimate freight and give the struggling farmer a bonus. Let them pay a reasonable freight on their super. and wheat and give the struggling farmer a bonus to make up for it. That would be one way of getting over the difficulty, particularly as the small struggling farmer could receive still further assistance through the Industries Assistance Board. By this means we would obviate assistance, at the expense of every section of the community, to the prosperous agriculturist. The time has arrived when there should be a reconsideration of the policy regarding railway concessions to farmers. If the same concession had been given to the mining industry, it would be in a more prosperous condition to-day. If some of the concessions were diverted from the farmers and given to the mining areas in the form of cheaper freights, it would rebound much to the benefit of Western Australia. But, no; these concessions must go to the farmers! Why? Because members of the Country Party hold the key to power. They have it in their power to say whether or not the Government shall remain in office. In the old days the Praetorian Guards smashed the Roman Empire. They placed in power the Emperor who would give them the most, and when that Emperor failed to satisfy their demands, they murdered him and elected another Emperor in his stead. The Country Party represent the Praetorian Guards of to-day. They hold the pistol at the head of the Government all the time. If the Government

do not grant concessions, they will be murdered and another Government will be installed. To-day those hon. members are bringing about their own downfall and the sooner they go the whole hog, the better.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

Mr. HUGHES: I am glad to hear that the Minister for Railways agrees with me.

Hon. F. T. Broun: How long has the concession regarding superphosphates been in force?

Hon. P. Collier: For about 12 or 13 years.

Hon. F. T. Broun: It was brought in during the Labour Government's régime.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course, the Labour Government had a sound policy of assistance in the interests of the farmer.

Hon. F. T. Broun: How can you say that we hold the pistol to the head of the Government seeing that the Labour Government granted the concession?

Mr. HUGHES: That was when the farmers were struggling.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You held the pistol at the heads of the Government as soon as you had the chance and fired it.

The Minister for Mines: But it was only a blank cartridge.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was not blank. It took effect.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member wants to know why the Labour Government gave the concession. It was because they wanted to foster the agricultural industry. But in 1911 the farmers were struggling.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are struggling to-day.

Mr. HUGHES: Oh, yes! Those on £12 10s. per week are struggling.

The Minister for Agriculture: In what proportion are they?

Mr. Piccotte: How many returned soldiers are among them?

Hon. P. Collier: One question at a time, please.

Mr. HUGHES: On the number of assessments so far completed, there are 1,500 out of 3,200.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why, there are in the State 8,000 wheat growers alone!

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister knows the assessments are not complete. However, the Labour Government, in making the concession, were laying the foundations of the prosperity the farmers are enjoying to-day.

Mr. Money: They did it because it would be of advantage to the State.

Mr. HUGHES: I will accept that. The hon. member wanted to know why the Labour Government did not take away the concession. The answer is because the farmers were struggling, whereas to-day they are not.

Mr. Harrison: If it was good business then, it is good business now.

Mr. HUGHES: Consider the variation there has been in the price of wheat.

Hon. F. T. Broun: You could not grow wheat at the price it is to-day.

Mr. HUGHES: But others can. In 1914 the farmers were getting 3s. per bushel for

their wheat. In war time the price rose to 9s. In consequence of that, the farmers are now enjoying great prosperity. The Premier himself said that 1,100 clients of the Industries Assistance Board had cleared their assets, established farms and had money in the bank; that although they had been down and out during the drought period, they were now made men. As the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale) points out, they have gradually improved their holdings, and in effect are now well established on their feet. I say they are ungrateful if they refuse to pay reasonable freight for the carriage of their goods over the railways. If any indication of the general agricultural prosperity were wanting, it is to be found in the number of motor cars possessed by the farmers.

Hon. P. Collier: The country roads are blocked with them.

Mr. HUGHES: I am pleased to see the farmers with motor cars. But it is bad policy for a man to show his prosperity in the form of a motor car, and then plead for special concessions on the railways. At a recent assembly of farmers at Bruce Rock, of the 46 who attended, 44 came in motor cars.

Hon. F. T. Broun: They deserve cars after working 24 hours a day for years.

Hon. P. Collier: They look healthy on it.

Hon. F. T. Broun: The hon. member would not like to do it.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, he would not like to go back to the old days.

Mr. HUGHES: No one denies that the farmers deserve their prosperity. We are pleased to see them prosperous, even if we are not prosperous ourselves; but when they are prosperous they should be willing to bear their fair share of the cost of maintaining the railways.

Hon. F. T. Broun: They pay their fair share. Cut out the country railways, and you will see how the others are paying.

Hon. P. Collier: We would cut out our railway losses if we did.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course the country would not be of any use at all without railways. If we were to cut out the country railways the farmer could not get his necessities, nor could he cart his produce to the city. I do not wish to set city against country, for the two interests are dovetailed. It is good for the country that there should be prosperity in the city, and it is good for the city to have prosperity in the country. But both should accept a reasonable share of the cost of maintaining the public services of the State. The time is arriving when we shall require a different railway policy. Miles and miles of our railways run through splendid land that has never felt the plough. Yet while we have alongside existing railways thousands of acres of land suitable for cultivation, we propose to spend nearly a million of money in building a new line in the South-West to open up land for settlers. As soon as a railway comes near it, every acre of unimproved land increases 10 or 12 times in value, and in conse-

quence land speculators simply sit back to win the unearned increment. The report of the Taxation Commissioner shows that the unimproved value of the lands of Western Australia represents 21 millions of money, and that a tax of 1s. in the pound on the unimproved value would bring in revenue of over a million, and would entirely pay interest and sinking fund on our railways and leave something to spare.

Mr. A. Thomson: It is a grand thing to tax the other fellow.

Mr. HUGHES: The land speculator ought to be taxed.

Mr. A. Thomson: But 1s. in the pound is fairly high.

Hon. P. Collier: The city men would have to pay half of it.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, I should like to see unimproved values taxation in the city. Unimproved values taxation would redound to the benefit of the farming community, as well as to every other section, and would bring into operation the unemployed lands of the State. Last year the railways gave to prosperous farmers concessions valued at £233,000. If £100,000 of that had been given to the assistance of secondary industries, it would have been of great advantage to the State.

Mr. A. Thomson: You know that the Commonwealth will not allow us to differentiate as between our own industries and those of the Eastern States.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. This is the sort of thing we are doing with our railway freights: Local timber 2.27d. per ton mile; imported timber 4.059d. per ton mile. Yet the hon. member says we cannot give preference to local manufactures.

Mr. A. Thomson: Not as against those of the Eastern States.

Mr. HUGHES: Does the hon. member contend that we could not give a lump sum for the development of our industries?

Mr. A. Thomson: Not in bonuses.

Mr. HUGHES: Yet the Government are advancing to certain industries money that they will never get back. What is the difference between that and the giving of bonuses?

Mr. Teesdale: You need not rub it in to them about not getting it back.

Hon. P. Collier: The industries are forgetting that they owe it.

Mr. HUGHES: I am satisfied that we shall have to give assistance to secondary industries. The only way to find the money is to divert some of the concessions from prosperous agriculturists. As a rule I am not parochial. I forbear a good deal in respect of railway rates in the metropolitan area and the very bad treatment we get at the hands of the railway administration. But I must say a word about the lack of railway facilities in the metropolitan area. At Melbourne-road, at Pier-street, and at Claisebrook-road we have level crossing gates. At any time during working hours it is not unusual to see a long queue of vehicles carrying merchandise and held up

by the closed gates. If the Minister would send a clerk to Claisebrook-road, and let him tally the number of waiting vehicles and calculate the loss to the community in consequence of the lack of overhead bridges, the result would astonish him. Yet we can get no assistance for railway bridges. I believe plans for the Claisebrook-road bridge have been in existence for ten years. Yet any day whole queues of vehicles may be seen wasting valuable time, hindering the business of the community, because they cannot cross the line. It is time our friends in the country gave us some consideration.

Mr. A. Thomson: We are giving you all possible consideration; you are living on us.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Take no notice of him.

Mr. HUGHES: Such a silly statement one would expect from no other man in the community.

Mr. A. Thomson: It is absolutely true, all the same.

Mr. HUGHES: On whom is the hon. member living?

Mr. Teesdale: He does not show the condition you do.

Hon. P. Collier: He is not working.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course not. He tried his hand at erecting churches, developing the potentialities of the next world.

The CHAIRMAN: That has nothing to do with the vote.

Mr. HUGHES: It is time our friends in the country gave us some consideration and allowed the Government to place money at the disposal of the metropolitan area for those three necessary bridges. The Minister should adopt my suggestion to have a tally made of the vehicles held up and the time lost daily at each of the crossings.

Hon. P. Collier: If he will not do so, organise a busy bee.

The Minister for Mines: What about taking a day off, and doing it yourself?

Mr. HUGHES: I have told the Minister that thousands of pounds are lost every day. The Minister should verify it for himself. Surely the business of the metropolitan area is not so unimportant to the Government that they are above making a test to ascertain the loss. It would astonish the Minister and members generally if they had particulars of the loss. Plans for the Claisebrook-road bridge have been in existence for ten years.

Hon. P. Collier: I approved of the bridge when I was in office.

Mr. HUGHES: And nothing has been done since. When the Government treat the growing interests of the metropolitan area so flippantly year after year and show no consideration for its needs, we are justified in concluding they have a total disregard for the welfare of the metropolis. The proportion of first class to second class carriages in the metropolitan area is too great. To-day I boarded a train at Mt. Lawley, and the people in the second class compartments were standing on one another, though there was plenty of room in the first class compart-

ments. The result is that people with second class tickets use first class carriages and render themselves liable to prosecution for a breach of the regulations. I travel three or four times a day and invariably the second class carriages are crowded while there is plenty of room in the first class. If the Minister is not prepared to cut out the first class entirely, a larger proportion of second class carriages must be provided. The first class coaches are not bringing in additional revenue, because people with second class tickets are riding in them. If the department are short of second class rolling stock, some of the first class coaches should be reduced to second class. It is a crying shame that women and children joining trains at Midland Junction and at the stations nearer to Perth can never get a seat. Often they are lucky if they can get standing room. The service has been reduced to a minimum and the trains are always crowded. The service must be paying handsomely.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM (Kalgoorlie) [9.21]: On the 12th September I submitted a motion to get an expression of opinion on the question of granting reduced fares to relatives of inmates of the Wooroloo Sanatorium. The Minister gave an assurance that the matter would be inquired into, and that he would make a statement when the Railway Estimates were being considered. On that assurance I withdrew the motion. Since then I met the Minister at his suggestion in conference with the Commissioner of Railways, and it was agreed that a 50 per cent. reduction of fares should be granted to relatives travelling to visit their friends in the sanatorium. I understand the Minister intends to make a statement when replying to this debate. I would like to know whether the matter has been finalised and what is being done to give effect to the suggestion. A considerable time has elapsed. Many of the people concerned are in indigent circumstances, and are precluded from visiting their friends owing to the fact that railway fares are so high.

[Mr. Stubbs took the Chair.]

Hon. F. T. BROWN (Beverley) [9.23]: I would not have spoken on this vote but for the fact that the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) made certain statements regarding the carriage of goods for the farmers. I do not wish to make any disparaging remarks regarding the city. I entertain as good feelings towards the people of the city as towards those in the country. The least we can do is to agree that the one cannot do without the other. The hon. member inferred that a considerable tonnage of produce from the country was carried at a loss. That is not a fact. It is true that superphosphate is carried at a very low rate, but this policy redounds to the advantage of the State.

Mr. Hughes: Do you say my figures are wrong?

Hon. F. T. BROWN: No; but the statement the hon. member made might lead the public

to believe that the railways are carrying most of the country's produce at a loss. That is not correct. The policy of carrying superphosphate at a very low rate has been in force for many years, and it was adopted for a very good reason. Though the rate is .53d, practically the lowest rate on the schedule, it was adopted in order to encourage farmers to put an increased acreage under crop. The increased production thus secured benefits the State generally. The hon. member said the railways were carrying wheat at a very low rate, and I understood him to infer that it was being carried at a loss.

Mr. Hughes: I said you had a concession of £135,000 a year.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: How is it that our railways show an actual profit only during the months of January, February and March, when the bulk of the wheat is being carried over the railways? If the hon. member obtains the figures from the Commissioner, he will find that his argument is knocked clean out. Wheat is being carried at a considerable profit to the railways. On the schedule of paying traffic wheat is shown as 1.12d., a figure much below the rate at which many other commodities are carried. But it must be borne in mind that the railways are able to carry wheat at a much greater profit, in spite of the rate being low in contrast to that charged for other commodities. Every truck can be loaded to its fullest capacity and full trainloads can be made up. This does not apply to other commodities. It is impossible to load a 12-ton truck to anything like its full capacity with chaff, but it is possible to overload with wheat. Thus it is that wheat can be carried at a cheaper rate and, during the three months it is carried the railways show a profit.

Mr. Hughes: A profit, or an excess of revenue over expenditure?

Hon. F. T. BROWN: A profit.

Mr. Hughes: You are wrong.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I have seen the figures, and I know I am right. The hon. member was not fair in the statements he made regarding the farmers. He should take into consideration not only the produce the farmers send away, but also the commodities they use. The rate on livestock is very high, 2.62d.

The Minister for Mines: There is no backloading, as there is with wheat.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: There is a certain amount of back loading. The Commissioner is receiving considerable freight from graziers who buy up store sheep and retruck them. At the last sale 2,000 were purchased and retrucked. Later on they will have to be railed back to the metropolitan area. The Commissioner gets the freight several times over.

Hon. P. Collier: Most of that loading is only one way.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I admit that.

The Minister for Mines: Trucks are used that cannot be used for any other purpose.

Hon. P. Collier: And the journeys are long.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: The average haulage of sheep last year was 136 miles, of wheat 125 miles, of chaff and oats 122 miles, and of wool, on which there is a high freight of 5.13d. it was 140 miles.

Hon. P. Collier: And cattle?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: For stock one has to pay for a full truck or half a truck, large or small as the case may be. Then there are the commodities used on the farm. Take vehicles of all descriptions. A large proportion of these is made in the metropolitan area, and has to be trucked by rail. These come under the third class rate, which is a high one, and they work out at 8.96d., the highest on the schedule. Then take the commodities we use in our homes. Most of these are carried under the first and second class rates, which are high. They work out at 5.55d. and 7.44d. respectively. Because superphosphate is carried at a low rate the hon. member should not infer that farmers are getting commodities over the railways at too cheap a rate.

Hon. P. Collier: They are not paying sufficient for the services rendered to them.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: They are paying more than sufficient. Take wool and stock, for instance.

Hon. P. Collier: Taking them all in all, they are only paying for the services rendered to them.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: If superphosphates are included and everything is worked out, the producer will be found to be paying more than he should be paying for the services rendered to him.

Hon. P. Collier: The rates are fixed to cover the cost of the services rendered.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: More than the cost, otherwise where would the profit come in?

Hon. P. Collier: We do not get any.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: There is a small profit. The various commodities used on the farm and in the home in everyday life, and used on the gold-fields, are paid for by the people there. Dwellers in the metropolitan area have to pay none of that freight. Nine-tenths of the commodities imported into the city are brought here by boat to Fremantle and taken to the city by motor lorry or by river transport. In most cases no railway freight is paid upon them.

Mr. Hughes: What about meat? Do we not pay you back the freight on stock in the high prices we pay for meat?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: Part of that might be paid.

Mr. Hughes: Do you supply our meat at a loss?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: What would the people do if the farmers did not produce it?

Mr. Hughes: What would the farmer do if we did not eat it?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: We would soon find someone else to eat it.

Hon. P. Collier: You could not get an overseas market for it.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: The member for East Perth referred to the price of wheat. The average farmer to-day cannot produce wheat at 4s. and make a profit.

Mr. Hughes: Where does he get his income?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: In this State a large number of farmers will not get a greater average than 10 bushels to the acre. On that basis they cannot make a profit at 4s. a bushel.

Mr. Hughes: How do they get their income? The average income of a large percentage of them is £650 a year.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: Some of them may average that income. The hon. member would not care to work under the conditions they have worked for the last 15 or 20 years and finish up with an income of £650.

Mr. Hughes: Many people have worked longer than that without reaching that salary.

Hon. P. Collier: People in the city have worked just as hard as the farmer and have not a shilling.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: Why did they not go on the land?

Hon. P. Collier: Everyone cannot go on the land.

The Minister for Mines: A fair percentage of these people have also produced wool and obtained a high price for it.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: We cannot afford to have our freights increased.

Hon. P. Collier: You want them reduced.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: It is not possible to reduce them. If we take the working expenses per head of the population and the rate per head of the population, we find that on the average we are paying more for our commodities than is being paid in the Eastern States.

Mr. Clydesdale: Not for superphosphate and wheat. What is the price in South Australia?

Hon. F. T. BROUN: It pays them to carry superphosphate for nothing. Cut out the superphosphate and tell the farmers not to take any more. What would become of the railways? That is a futile argument. The Labour Government did not think fit to increase the freight on superphosphate.

Hon. P. Collier: Because the farmers were struggling.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: There are just as many struggling farmers on the land to-day as there were then. Because the Commissioner of Taxation shows that a few farmers are making £650 a year, exception is taken to this. The unfortunate farmer has worked 20 years at 24 hours a day.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a slight exaggeration.

Hon. F. T. BROUN: I admit it. On the average they have worked over 12 hours a day and in the summer they often work 16 hours a day.

Mr. Hughes: Hundreds of men in the metropolitan area work harder than they do.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: The farmer is entitled to all he gets.

Mr. Hughes: No one says he is not, but he should pay a reasonable freight on his goods.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: He is paying more than that, in comparison with what the friends of the hon. member are paying. I do not say they should pay any more, neither do I want to create any ill-feeling as between the city and the country. That would be one of the worst things we could do. We are already divided as between States, and we do not want to be divided amongst ourselves in Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: You are divided politically. Why do you not join with the city party politically?

The Minister for Mines: Judging by what has been said to-night they are no more at variance than you are over there.

Hon. P. Collier: You are in two different camps. There is a passage-way between you.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Reference has been made to the large estates along the railway.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a fact.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: There are not as many as the hon. member imagines. It is suggested that because of these large estates the railways are not paying. To some extent it is so, but as time goes on the position will be altered.

Hon. P. Collier: It is becoming worse. The last census of 10 years shows that the older settled districts such as Northam, Toodyay, Pingelly, and York are going back in population.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I cannot understand that.

Hon. P. Collier: The census figures show it to be so.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: In all these districts large families have been growing up and the estates have not been increased to any extent. Many of the big holdings have been divided up, because the sons are now in a position to take them over. One estate I know of has been divided amongst seven boys, and there is not a big area left. That will occur in the case of other estates.

Hon. P. Collier: Take that good stretch of country along the Avon Valley as far as Pingelly and Beverley.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: There are very few large estates around Beverley.

Hon. P. Collier: There are plenty near Pingelly but the population has not increased during the last 10 years.

Mr. McCallum: These districts have not maintained the natural increases.

Mr. Clydesdale: They have lost more immigrants than any other part of the State.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Most of the immigrants have remained in the city. A decrease in population in the country districts would show that the conditions there in comparison with those in the city are of such a nature as to cause people to come to town.

Hon. P. Collier: It proves that land is not available for people in those districts.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: Nothing of the kind. The facilities for enjoyment are better in the city for young people, and they go there in consequence.

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

Hon. F. T. BROWN: There is a method of dealing with large estates so that they can be brought into use and be made to help in bringing revenue to the railways.

Mr. Hughes: In what way?

Hon. F. T. BROWN: By imposing a tax to compel the owners to improve their land.

Mr. Hughes: That is what we are aiming at.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I have always advocated that.

Hon. P. Collier: All farmers are not as good as you are.

Hon. F. T. BROWN: I would sooner be in the city working on a salary of £200 or £400 a year. I am glad the financial position of our railways has improved. The position with respect to our agricultural lines must improve as time goes on. Many of our railways have been run out practically through virgin land. The acreage under cultivation will gradually increase, production will be greater, and there will be more profits accruing to the railways. Another point I wish to bring to the Minister's attention is the necessity for sending out clean livestock trucks to the country. I have mentioned the matter to the Commissioner more than once, and I think he is doing his best with regard to it. Only recently I imported from the Eastern States five valuable rams. They arrived by the "Katoomba" and were put in a small truck at Fremantle and despatched to me. Unfortunately it rained during the whole night of transit, which made matters worse; but when the rams arrived they were in a filthy state, and up to their hocks in manure. I would not have cared so much if they had been ordinary stock, but I consider that every precaution should be taken as regards trucks for the conveyance of prize or valuable stock. The trucks should be cleaned. In this case the truck could easily have been washed out at Fremantle before the stock were loaded. On arrival the rams were not fit to look at. I hope metropolitan members will give some consideration to the needs of country residents, and that they will believe we have no ill-feeling at all towards any of the metropolitan people. We want unanimity between the country and the metropolis.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [9.48]: I, too, have a hardy annual to bring under notice. The use of Collie coal on our railways is a matter which needs the gravest consideration by the railway authorities.

The Minister for Railways: It has got that consideration. We are going to use 100 per cent. of Collie coal.

Mr. PIESSE: That will probably mean burning 100 per cent. of the country.

The Minister for Mines: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. PIESSE: The member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) said to-day that there was such a thing as the mixing of coal, and that that was the right to do. Some Collie coal creates far more sparks from the locomotive funnel than other Collie coal.

Mr. Wilson: Yes; but the former coal is not burnt in the wheat belt.

Mr. PIESSE: I have seen it used there myself.

The Minister for Mines: Last year.

Mr. PIESSE: Year after year. I have counted the fires caused by it. On one occasion the railway line from Wilberforce siding up to the rise was set on fire in 17 places.

The Minister for Mines: That does not matter.

Mr. PIESSE: But the fires ran over into the adjoining fields.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. PIESSE: The member for Collie will bear me out that there is coal taken from a mine at Collie known as the Premier.

Mr. Wilson: But that is not burnt in the country districts.

Mr. PIESSE: There is a Collie coal now obtained which does not spark nearly so much as other Collie coal. I may mention yet another hardy annual, the complaint of the drivers and firemen at being compelled to use this inferior coal. Two or three years ago they said that if they were permitted to use the better class of Collie coal, there would not be so much of a grievance. If the Railway Department obtain from Collie, coal that will not spark, then that coal should be used in the country districts during the hot months. Again and again have I seen fires caused by sparks from locomotives, and therefore I hope the Minister will seriously consider that trouble, which during this year is likely to cause very heavy loss. Never in the history of the South-West have we had such abundance of grass as exists there to-day. If one spark should ignite the adjoining country on a suitable day, there will instantly be miles in flames. I speak from an intimate knowledge of what fires can do. Other members are well aware of the danger of ignition during the coming summer. In fairness to the officers of the Railway Department I must say that they give the farmers as much consideration as possible in this matter. I hope the Railway Department will be permitted to use a better class of Collie coal in the agricultural districts during the hot months, thus avoiding what will be a disaster unless adequate precautions are taken.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.54:] The last speaker must be fully aware that during the war and since the war nearly 100 per cent. of Collie coal has been used by the Railway Department. There are now about 1,100 farmers under the Industries Assistance Board. Last year those farmers paid a total of £23,943 1s. 7d. for insurance of crops against fire and hail.

Mr. Piesse: They do not come within the inflammable area.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The total of the losses paid amounted to only £5,102 15s. 8d.

Mr. Piesse: Grass is not insured.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Industries Assistance Board came into existence during 1915, and from that time up to the end of last March the total of the premiums paid for insurance of crops—and Collie coal has been used during almost the whole of that period—was £166,105. Yet the insurance companies have paid in respect of losses from both fire and hail a total of only £53,544.

Mr. Piesse: That is in the distant wheat belt.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Collie coal is said to be worse at a distance than near at hand.

The Premier: This has nothing to do with the railways.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has, as showing that fires do not occur so frequently as the member for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse) has suggested. Now I wish to reply shortly to some statements of the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun). From that hon. member's speech—and he is generally very fair—one would think that the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) had argued against low rates being charged for the carriage of the farmer's produce and fertiliser. The member for East Perth did nothing of the kind. What he did say was that those farmers who are prosperous, who have been many years on the land and are so thoroughly established as to be making large incomes, should pay rates which will reimburse the Railway Department for the carriage of their goods. The member for Beverley said that the farmer's wheat is taken in train loads. So is local timber taken in trainloads. During the last financial year the earnings per ton-mile have been 2.27d., while fertiliser has been charged only .53d. Again, wheat in trainloads pays 1.12d., as against 2.27d. paid by timber in trainloads. Hay, straw, chaff, which the member for Beverley said could not be conveyed in the same manner as wheat, are charged 1.39d. In the matter of train loads, therefore, the farmers have a preference over other local industries. The member for Beverley pointed out that the Labour Party, when in office, did not alter this state of affairs. There was an interjection to the effect that the farmers were not so prosperous then as they are to-day. The Labour Government took office in 1911, and that very year there was a partial drought, which meant ruin to a large number of farmers. At the time, therefore, the farmers could not afford to pay any increased charges. In 1914 there was another drought. We did raise the rate on fertiliser a little. One of the conditions which were presented to us like a pistol pointed at our heads—and let me add that the pistol was fired—was that the Government must remit to the farmers £60,000 per annum. That was one of the conditions on which the National Government took office.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, a present of £60,000 to the farmers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As a result, in July, 1916, at the first meeting of the House, the Labour Party were shot out of office, simply because they would not agree to all the demands of the Country Party. We were unfortunate enough to lose the Roebourne seat, thus finding ourselves in a minority of one instead of a majority of one. So we were shot out of office because we would not agree to the Country Party's demands. That is an actual fact. With all due respect to the Premier, I wish to say that in agreeing to the Country Party's demands the National Government did more harm to this State than had ever been done previously. It will be many years before the damage can be repaired.

The Premier: It is the first time I have heard that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has been ruled that the question of large estates has nothing to do with the Railway Estimates, but perhaps I may make a reference to it. The member for Beverley has said that there are no large estates in this country. But he was a member of a Cabinet which brought in a Bill for the subdivision of large estates.

Hon. P. Collier: The Bill was passed through this House twice.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier himself has recognised that there are large estates in Western Australia by endeavouring on two occasions to pass through Parliament a Bill for their subdivision. I am pleased to remember that this side of the House saved the face of the Government by helping to carry the Bill, while members on the cross benches including the present Minister for Agriculture and deputy Premier, voted against the Bill.

The Minister for Agriculture: Will you not agree that the large land owners of this State are doing more than any other section?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not arguing that point. We cannot do without the farmers, but I do not want a wrong impression to get abroad. It is wrong to say that the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) suggested increasing the rates. He said that we should keep the rates down and assist the poor farmers, but that those large farmers who were making big incomes should pay their fair share towards the cost of running the railways.

The Minister for Agriculture: Don't you agree that the landholders are doing more here than the landholders in any other part of Australia?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know! I am not taking that point. There must be no misrepresentation in this matter. In his first financial statement in this House, the Premier pointed out that the fertiliser carried for the farmers in that year was £80,000 below the necessary cost entailed in carting it for them. Hon. members can

look up the statement for themselves in "Hansard."

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not think anyone will dispute it, but this is a matter of policy.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister must realise that what I am saying is correct. The member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) said that the fertilisers were carried for a halfpenny per mile and showed a profit.

Mr. A. Thomson: He admitted that possibly there was a loss.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He said there was a profit. Hon. members must remember that during that period there was a considerable increase in the cost of running the railways. I am not such a fool as to say that the farming community has done no good for the State. They have, and we require them, and still more of them. If the Premier brought forward his Bill this session to deal with the large holdings, he would get the support of the Labour Party, but the Country Party would not support it.

Hon. P. Collier: No fear.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is because there are big landholders controlling their movement, and the small man's interests are not conserved. I have nothing more to say on the Estimates and I would not have spoken had it not been necessary to reply to the member for Beverley.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [10.4]: I do not intend to say anything about the carriage of wheat and superphosphates, but I desire to draw attention to a few local requirements along the Great Southern railway. I do not intend to find fault with the Minister for spending money at Mt. Barker.

Hon. P. Collier: That was a terrible thing.

Mr. Marshall: What about the calf skin?

Mr. HICKMOTT: I do not think one place should be singled out and all others neglected. We have another important station along the line which is a junction for other lines. Between £300 and £400 has been spent on buildings there, but the conditions the men are working under now—we have a night and a day station-master, showing that there is work to be done there—are absolutely unfit for them. Something should be done to remove the existing disability. We have a dangerous railway crossing, and the Minister knows that there have been two or three accidents there. There was one death, a lady's leg was broken, and a youth injured. When the train is in the station it extends beyond the crossing. It is a dangerous crossing and some attention should be given to it. Ever since the line was first constructed, and the existing buildings erected by the contractor, nothing has been done beyond some slight improvements. These two stations are important places, and should receive some attention. The officers there should be given better facilities for carrying out their work. I do not wish to delay

the Committee by stressing the necessity for low freights in connection with wheat or fertiliser. We know that wheat is carried in trainloads more rapidly than any other commodity, and the traffic along the line makes it one of the busiest and most profitable to the State. At Popanyinning there is comparatively little business, but there is a fine platform and brick station. At these other centres, the housing accommodation for the staff is poor indeed. I trust the Minister will look into these matters.

[*Mr. Angelo took the Chair.*]

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [10.8]: I want to draw attention to the disparity between the trains running north and south as against those running east and west. I do this because I notice a decision has been arrived at to duplicate the line from east to west. It would be well to analyse the existing conditions regarding the line from east to west, to see how it is working and how it is paying. This is not the time when any Government can play with making promises or do anything in the way of railway construction, unless there is a fair chance of the line becoming remunerative within a reasonable time. Some years ago the Government decided to construct a line connecting the Great Southern centres of Narrogin, Williams, and other places to the eastward with the nearest port. It is interesting to know what arrangements were made for the travelling public along the line from east to west. Strange though it may appear to hon. members, there is only one day in the week that we can get from Bunbury to Narrogin, and the train travels at the enormous speed of from seven to eight miles per hour.

Hon. P. Collier: It has plenty of time to do the journey.

The Minister for Mines: And you can take the same train back in the next week.

Mr. MONEY: The difficulty is that one cannot get back at all.

Mr. Hughes: The train actually exhausts itself.

Mr. MONEY: It is the most astonishing railway arrangement one can imagine.

Hon. P. Collier: It must be.

Mr. MONEY: There is only one day in the week you can go there and no day in the week to get back! There is nothing so strange as that which is true.

Hon. P. Collier: Which line is that?

Mr. MONEY: The Narrogin-Collier-Bunbury line.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a conspiracy to keep the people there.

Mr. MONEY: I have made representations to the department and the answer I have received is: "How many passengers will there be; there are not enough to warrant a through train." How can the passengers get there? It is too absurd.

Hon. P. Collier: How can the train go without people?

The Minister for Mines: We will provide trains every hour of the day if you guarantee the traffic.

Mr. MONEY: This is a trunk line east and west and a direct line from that part of the State to the nearest port. I am sorry the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) is not in his seat. I do not know what interests have been at work, which result in the country service running at the rate of seven miles an hour while the city and suburban service over a similar line and with similar engines, runs at 25 miles an hour. There is no answer to it. I found that one train arrived at Collier half an hour after another train left that centre. I asked why one train could not be delayed or the other speeded up so as to junction with the other train, and so as to enable people to get through in one day.

Mr. A. Thomson: Of course that could not be done.

Mr. MONEY: The answer I received was, that it could not be done, because at the other end a shift had to be worked of eight hours. In consequence of the award providing for that shift, I was told the train could not start a little earlier so as to make the junction. If that is the position, either the railway should be shifted, or the union.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know that Fremantle is the natural port for Narrogin and the surrounding districts?

Mr. MONEY: It is not, but it will be so long as you people control the railways. So long as that continues, the metropolitan trains are likely to continue at 25 miles an hour while the country trains proceed at seven miles an hour. This is a matter of centralisation, concerning which we talk so much and do so little to alter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But Fremantle is the natural port.

The Premier: You would contend that Fremantle is the natural port for all districts.

Mr. MONEY: I do not know how it is possible for these arrangements to obtain on such a line in the country, when with the same rolling stock it is possible to have a service running at 25 miles an hour in the metropolitan area.

Hon. P. Collier: How do you account for it?

The Minister for Mines: I must go into the matter.

Mr. MONEY: It is a question of centralisation in Perth and Fremantle.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, join up with the Country Party executive and you will get it changed!

Mr. MONEY: On this matter I am speaking from experience. I desired to go across to Narrogin, and that was the result. I made inquiries from the heads of the departments, but the result was the same.

Hon. P. Collier: You can take a boat to Fremantle, and get round that way.

Mr. MONEY: People are coming to Perth 120 miles, and going down to Narrogin 227 miles, instead of making that journey of 130

miles along the natural route. The sooner this is remedied the better for Western Australia, because people cannot afford to travel three times the distance when there is a direct railway. At present, as I have shown, it saves time to take the round-about route. No clearer example of unreasonable train arrangements could be instanced. I was not here when the Minister introduced his Estimates.

The Minister for Mines: That was your loss.

Mr. MONEY: Probably it was. But I should like to know whether any serious attempt has been made to acknowledge the terrible state of the railway grades in the South-West, impossible grades in lines carrying a huge timber traffic, a huge coal traffic, and a huge wheat traffic? Has anything been done in the matter of providing electrical power from Collie for the railways of the South-West? It is of no use going on in the old way, with the building of railways just as they were built 15 or 20 years ago, notwithstanding that other countries acknowledge the necessity for electrical transport. Again, I wonder whether, in the light of the probable unification of the railways in Australia, we are going to continue building lines on the old gauge, thus rendering it more difficult to bring about standardisation. I have heard nothing from the Minister on the subject, but I say that reform is necessary.

The Minister for Mines: I agree.

Mr. MONEY: If Australia is to be a nation, we must standardise our railways, for we require economic transport just as do other parts of the world.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.20]: There is a new development near to Westonia where certain facilities have been asked for. The fencing of the railway yard has been promised by the Commissioner, and I should be glad if the Minister could speed up this facility. I am hopeful that a further development will take place in mining in that centre. A gentleman there is trying to do what he can to get out alluvial with the object of using the money earned to re-establish mining in Westonia. In spending that money there he is not only doing a service to the agricultural interest, but also, I hope, to mining. A little further west we come to Walgoolan. There will be a heavy development there. It is one of the finest belts of country in the district. It runs right through to the Mt. Marshall railway, constituting a magnificent belt. That being so, we should not hang back in giving railway facilities to that area. In his first year up there one of the settlers has 700 acres under crop. I hope something will be done to provide the settlers with transport facilities. I then come on past Burracoppin to Merredin where, owing to its geographical position, nearly all the main trains run through between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. In the new waiting room the accommodation for the passengers is unsatisfactory, but the refreshment room is a disgrace. There is a fine signal box, but up to

the present about 20 dog boxes have to do duty as offices. As Narrogin is the running centre for the Great Southern, so Merredin is bound to be the running centre for the Eastern line through the agricultural belt. As I say, the refreshment room at the station is a disgrace, and I trust a serviceable building will be erected in the near future. At Tammin a few months ago the Premier received a deputation and gave a definite promise that he would use his influence with the Commissioner and the Minister to have a platform put in.

The Minister for Mines: Who, the Premier? He has no influence.

The Premier: Thank God I haven't.

Mr. HARRISON: At all events, I understand the Premier gave a definite promise that this matter would be taken in hand. Tammin really ought to have a platform.

The Premier: I agree.

Mr. HARRISON: No other centre up there has contributed as much wheat traffic as has Tammin.

The Minister for Mines: They don't use a platform for wheat.

Mr. HARRISON: But why penalise Tammin when platforms are given to other centres? Tammin is the oldest centre on the road.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not admit that.

Mr. HARRISON: You were Minister for Railways yourself, so do not say too much.

Hon. P. Collier: And you never once asked me for a platform.

Mr. HARRISON: Certain facilities are required at Waeel, facilities necessary to health. They ought to be provided. At Meckering a truck of gravel and a few sleepers would give them all they want. Why not let them have it? It would be of great advantage to people travelling. Two roads converge almost to a point, and just a small ramp requires to be thrown up outside for loading.

Hon. P. Collier: A couple of farmers could do it before breakfast.

Mr. HARRISON: Meckering is an old-established district with a lot of traffic, and this facility would be of advantage, not only to the farms, but to the traders in the town. I trust the Minister will take note of the "Hansard" report—because I do not see him making any notes himself—and put this matter in hand at once. I will not enter into any controversy over traffic rates for wheat or sugar, because the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) has ably defended the farmers in that respect. I trust the Minister will supply these several necessary facilities.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany—in reply) [10.27]: I had proposed to detain the Committee for some time in order that I might reply to the criticisms aimed at the department and me by hon. members, but in view of the lateness of the hour I now propose to be as brief as possible. I want to tell the hon. member who has just resumed his seat that I am fully aware of the election

next March and that, therefore, this is an occasion when grievances of an appropriate nature should be duly brought forward.

Mr. Harrison: You can cut that out. I am not thinking about the election.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: As I will not be here next session, if the hon. member is prepared to accept my promise that he shall have a platform, I am quite prepared to give it.

Hon. P. Collier: But it will not be binding on your successor.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, of course not. It reminds me of a request once made to me for an overhead bridge at Mullewa. To those asking for it I said we had certain funds available, and that so far as we could use them in the direction of aiding the earning capacity of the railways we were prepared to do so. I told them also that when at some future time we had sufficient money to go right round, they would get their overhead bridge. I said to them, "I will promise you that when funds are made available for such purposes you shall have your overhead bridge at Mullewa."

Hon. P. Collier: That was definite enough.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, wasn't it? On my return to Perth, the member for Guildford (Mr. Davies) introduced a deputation asking for an overhead bridge at West Guildford. I gave to them precisely the same reply. It appeared in the newspapers, and on the same day I received an indignant wire from Mullewa—"Have you forgotten your promise?" I wired back that I had not forgotten it, that I had merely repeated it, and asked them what more did they want. After all, it is one thing to make request for the expenditure of money, and another to decide how best to spend the strictly limited amount available. Under existing conditions, the many demands made for important requirements should be conceded rather than that we should spend money in making it easy to cross over a railway line. We are justified in asking that these things wait while we overcome the difficulties resultant on the war conditions, when material was not available and money was scarce and dear. The most important matter was that mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the Collie coal contract. I repeat I had no knowledge of the recent contract until it was completed. I have asked the Commissioner for an explanation in order that his position may not be misunderstood. The Leader of the Opposition said if the Commissioner had made a definite agreement while he was Minister, there would not have been room in the department for the Commissioner and himself. I do not think the hon. member would say that if he understood the position. The question of fixing a price for coal from Collie is quite out of the hands of the Commissioner. It is fixed by a tribunal over which neither the Commissioner, the coal company, nor the Government has any control. The tribunal was appointed in the first instance under the War Precautions Act and afterwards it carried on under an Act

that took the place of the former statute. The tribunal is still in existence and we cannot interfere with the price of coal for consumption on the railways. There was no question of policy affecting the price. It was merely a question of arriving at the basis of the price for the varying grades of coal from the Collie district. The other question was from what mines the coal should be obtained and what proportion should be taken from each mine. In view of the fact that in 1920 the Commissioner of Railways had submitted that question to the Government for a decision, and had obtained a definite decision from the Government, he claims—and I think rightly—there was no necessity for him to resubmit the matter to the Government, because the conditions meanwhile had not changed. I have a minute dated the 29th November, 1920, containing an allocation of the quantities of coal from the different mines. On an assumed basis of 360,000 tons per annum, the distribution favoured by the Commissioner was:—Cardiff, 10 per cent., 26,000 tons; Co-operative, 42 per cent., 108,000 tons; Proprietary, 38 per cent., 100,000 tons; Westralia, 10 per cent., 26,000 tons. Paragraph 3 of the minute reads:—

You will note that this omits any supply from the Premier mine which, of course, is the worst coal, in addition to the mine being very awkwardly situated, viz., eight miles from Collie on the Collie-Narrogin railway. However, the Government may consider it desirable to give the Premier Company a proportion of the order with a view to keeping the mine alive. It does no other business, the department taking all that it can produce, which really is not much argument for keeping it alive. In view of this consideration, I suggest the following alternative allocation of order:—Cardiff, 10 per cent., 26,000 tons; Co-operative, 38 per cent., 100,000 tons; Proprietary, 33 per cent., 88,000 tons; Westralia, 10 per cent., 26,000 tons; Premier, 9 per cent., 20,000 tons.

The Commissioner adds that these allotments are in conformity with the steaming value of the coals demonstrated by tests carried out by the last Royal Commission on the Collie coal industry. I minuted to that "Approved on the basis of paragraph 3," laying down that the Premier mine was to get a proportion. It was essential that we should keep open a mine that was not embraced within the one company operating at Collie, and it was necessary to save the possibility of obtaining coal of a similar nature to give us a field on which to operate in years to come. The member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) knows that right along the line I have held that if we could get the engine-drivers up to the point where, subject to the allocation being satisfactory, they would use all local coal, we would burn 100 per cent. of Collie coal. At the first conference, when the representatives of the mine owners, the miners and the engine-drivers met—

Hon. P. Collier: When I was Minister I broke down their opposition by deciding off

my own bat that they would have to use Collie coal whether they liked it or not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I admit that. Although a Minister may decide on a certain course of action, if the engine-drivers using the coal take such a firm stand as they proposed to do—they almost threatened to strike—

Hon. P. Collier: They were threatening me all the time I was there because they wanted to take no coal at all from a couple of mines.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Collie knows I insisted that those mines should receive fair treatment, subject to an agreement being arrived at between the interested parties. The whole of the parties interested came to an agreement. The Commissioner said when he noticed the letter from the Crown Solicitor on the question of policy, his attention was directed to the minute from which I have just quoted. The position, however, has not altered in the slightest degree, except as regards the basis upon which the values of the coal from the respective mines should be arrived at. Under the agreement, in the event of the tribunal reducing the price of Collie coal, the price to the Railway Department is automatically reduced. If the Arbitration Court reduces the wages of the men in the coal industry, the price of coal to the department is automatically reduced. We have retained the allocation of coal to the different mines on the same basis as previously, a basis to which the interested parties have agreed, and there is no change, except that the Commissioner has made a three-years' contract in order to have coal available to the railways without any question whatsoever.

Mr. Wilson: The miners' wages are based on a sliding scale according to the price of coal.

Hon. P. Collier: The point is that if the price of coal comes down, then wages come down. That is not quite the same thing.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is the same as regards the agreement.

Hon. P. Collier: No, it is not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, under the agreement made by the Commissioner it is clearly stated that in the event of the cost of production being reduced, either by the tribunal or by other means, the reduction shall apply under the agreement. The State will get the full benefit. Every penny reduction in the price of Collie coal works out at a saving of £1,000 per annum to the department. The Commissioner of Railways claims that under the conditions of this agreement he will be able to overcome the many difficulties that arose previously, and there will be a difference in the price of coal representing a saving of £3,000 annually to the department. There may be differences of opinion on that, but the Commissioner is quite satisfied, from the opinions of those in a position to technically advise him, that that result will be attained, because of the system of arriving at the B.T.U. value of the coals from the different mines and the basis upon which they will be paid

for. The price, however, is definitely fixed by the coal tribunal.

Hon. P. Collier: The file does not show that any officer advised him. It shows that the Commissioner worked it out.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think Mr. Evans and Mr. Backshall, as well as the Commissioner, dealt with it, Mr. Evans being advised on the technical side by Mr. Lumb. The Commissioner assures me he has arrived at his conclusions on the opinions of the expert officers of his department. I wish to make this point because of the rumours in circulation concerning me. The "Worker" newspaper thought it had discovered something of tremendous moment. I admit the whole argument was purely political and on political matters I am not sufficiently thin-skinned to worry very much. It was suggested that the statement savoured of libel. That does not matter. These are the facts, as disclosed in the files. I never discussed this question with the Commissioner either by telephone or by minute to a greater extent than has already been stated by the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson). I had no idea that a contract for the supply of coal had been made by the Commissioner until the Leader of the Opposition asked the question.

Hon. P. Collier: I accepted that statement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know that, and so did the editor of the "Worker." He offered to make that definite statement when another party to the agreement drew attention to the actual facts, but he has not yet done it. Whatever our ideas on political questions may be, we ought to realise that for too long we have been adopting the attitude of trying to obtain a party advantage by endeavouring to damage the personal character of the individual. It does not reflect well on members and others that they should adopt that attitude. That unfortunately is what has arisen on this debate.

Hon. P. Collier: Not on this debate.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. Some members opposite kept on asking questions that had a particular inference. It was strange, they said, that the Commissioner should adopt this attitude; it required some explanation. The inference was that I must have had a hand in the matter irrespective of my declaration to the contrary. I am glad to say the Leader of the Opposition adopted an entirely different attitude. I give this out to whoever likes to hear it. Any of my political actions, either as Minister or as a member, in connection with any of these matters on which I have been scandalised, is open to the fullest investigation the moment it is asked for. I have heard all sorts of rumours. When the Premier announced that I was retiring from Cabinet to take up another position, the first thing I heard was that I had gone into the sandalwood business. The next thing was that I was going to take over the Collie mines. Then I was said to be combining

the two things. In the West Australian Club it was said I had combined sandalwood with the Collie mines and was in the thick of a beautiful ramp. The facts are that I am to be paid a salary under agreement, which is available for inspection by any member.

Mr. Hughes: The West Australian Club is not associated with us.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not say it is. I have drawn attention to the attitude of the "Worker," of which I am a shareholder.

Hon. P. Collier: There are no workers in the West Australian Club.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is recognised as a scandalmongering place, and what is said there does not affect me. We ought to be careful what we say for the purpose of making inferences and trying to impart those inferences to the public against any public man. All sorts of statements have been circulated, the outcome of inferences, and Royal Commissions have been appointed to inquire into them. When the Commissioners have brought in their findings it has been shown that there was nothing in the statements made. I had nothing to do with the Collie coal contract. From the point of view of the State the Commissioner did the right thing. My acceptance of a position with the Westralian Motors Company has nothing to do either with the conclusion or the consideration of the agreement made by the Commissioner on behalf of the Government. Now I come to other matters that count. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the astonishing fact that wages had decreased while salaries had increased. That is not quite correct.

Mr. McCallum: You made that statement, and the Leader of the Opposition tripped you up on it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Leader of the Opposition made it by way of interjection.

Mr. McCallum: He picked you up.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. He can answer for himself. The average wage paid has not decreased in spite of the reduction in the basic wage of from 13s. 4d. to 12s. 10d. On the 30th June, 1922, there were 6,330 wages men employed in the railways, earning at the rate of £1,410,794 per annum, giving an average of £222 17s. 6d. per man per year.

Mr. Hughes: Is that inclusive of overtime?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is the average rate paid. On the 30th June, 1923, there were 6,259 men employed, earning £1,395,113, an average of £222 17s. 11d. per man per year. The increase is only 5d. per man per year, but it is an increase and not a decrease.

Mr. Hughes: Due to overtime through retrenchment.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that for the wages staff?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: But the wages have been reduced.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The average salary to the 30th June, 1922, for the salaried staff was £286 3s. In 1923 it was £287 19s. 8d., an increase of £1 16s. 8d. for the salaried men. The main reason why there are no decreases, although the basic wage has been decreased, is because there is such a small proportion of the men in the service on the basic wage; nearly all are above it. The effect has not been along the lines members have indicated, namely, that because the basic wage has been reduced the men in the service have been reduced proportionately.

Mr. Hughes: There has been a lot of overtime consequent upon retrenchment.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am speaking of the average earnings of the men in the Railway Department.

Mr. Hughes: They had to work overtime to get it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The reduction that was accepted voluntarily by men in the service was 6d. a day. A similar amount was accepted voluntarily by the salaried staff.

Mr. McCallum: It was not accepted voluntarily. It was given by the Arbitration Court award so far as the Amalgamated Society was concerned.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. Even up to the Chief Mechanical Engineer a reduction of 6d. a day was accepted voluntarily by the salaried men in the same way as was done by the wages men.

Mr. McCallum: It was started by the decision of the Arbitration Court in the case of the Amalgamated Society. The salaried men generally were not reduced.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The salaried men accepted a voluntary reduction in the same ratio as was the case with the wages men.

Hon. P. Collier: That section of the salaried staff, who did not have their salaries compulsorily reduced.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There was no compulsory reduction in the salaried staff. The compulsory reduction by the Arbitration Court of 6d. a day applied to the wages men, and the salaried men accepted voluntarily a similar reduction.

Mr. McCallum: As an alternative to going to the court.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not saying why they did so.

Hon. P. Collier: My point did not relate to that. You were indicating where salaries have been increased, and I wondered why that was so when the basic wage had been decreased.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The basic wage has been reduced, but not the average wage. That is an entirely different thing.

Hon. P. Collier: No.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Only about 280 men on the 44-hour week earning 14s. a

day and 325 men on the 48-hour week earning 12s. 10d. a day were on the basic wage. This is less than 10 per cent. of the employees on wages, the remainder being junior workers who are below the basic wage for adults, or the superior class of workers who receive more than the basic wage. The reduction of the basic wage did not have a serious effect in reducing the average wage paid to the men in the service.

Mr. McCallum: That is a misleading statement. How many employees are there on the basic wage? There is a basic wage for all the different classes of work in the railways, and there was a reduction in each case. You are taking the basic wage at 13s. 8d.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I said 14s. The Commissioner says there are only 280 men on the 44-hour week earning 14s. a day and 325 on the 48-hour week earning 12s. 10d. a day.

Mr. McCallum: There are so many different basic wages. You are quoting them at 14s.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: What I have said shows that the average wage paid to the men in the service has not been reduced during the last 12 months.

Mr. Hughes: What about the overtime?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not care about that.

Mr. Hughes: Why not tell the whole of the truth?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot argue with the hon. member. A railway system operating to the extent which ours does is bound to have anomalies. If the department remove one anomaly, they create another. If they adjust the matter of freight on a pig from one point to another point, somebody else forwarding a calf skin will have a complaint. It suggests itself to me that the man mentioned by the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) as forwarding the calf skin, must have stolen the calf and killed it, and then sent away the skin so that nothing could be traced. Imagine a man in Katanning doing as we are told when he could have simply sold the calf skin to a merchant! These things have nothing to do with railway administration. Again, there is the question of scales. The member for Katanning knows that the type of scales he speaks of is the Avery type, which can be moved in a cart without difficulty; or else the weights can be taken away, the scale thus being rendered useless. What is the use of putting a scale of that sort at a siding?

Mr. A. Thomson: The settlers will guarantee to look after the scale.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The settlers will guarantee anything without financial responsibility. However, during recent months the Railway Department have evolved a policy for providing scales where the traffic justifies it. If an association of settlers, or the local branch of the Primary Producers' Association, will undertake to purchase scales on a time payment basis, the department will provide a set at the local siding. The

association or branch can operate the scales and collect all the fees, and pay the department back as they get the money. From the hon. member's complaint it is evident that somebody got a pound of tea from town and was not certain he was receiving the proper weight, and therefore wanted scales to weigh the pound of tea—after which he would probably get away with the scales. It is not a responsibility of the Railway Department to weigh commodities for the purpose of commercial sale.

Mr. A. Thomson: I never said so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But that is what the hon. member wants us to do.

Mr. A. Thomson: Why do you have scales at other stations?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Because there is someone in attendance at them.

Mr. Mann: You cannot have scales at unattended sidings.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Both the sidings which have been mentioned had someone in charge when the scales were put there. The member for Guildford (Mr. Davies) and other members suggested the reduction of fares and freights. After all, it is one thing to make suggestions which are popular, and it is another thing to apply those suggestions and at the same time justify their application. It would be simple and popular and easy to say, "We will make a reduction of 10 per cent. in fares, and a similar reduction in freights." But when, at the end of the year, the Treasurer brought down a budget with a huge deficit, everybody would say, "What sort of humbug is this?" Members may be able to curry favour by suggesting all these reductions, but they forget, at all events for the moment, that they are equally responsible with the Treasurer for seeing that as far as practicable, without injury being done to our industries, the railway ledger is made to balance. The time has not yet arrived when we can make substantial reductions. A concession of 10 per cent. might be granted in respect of workers' tickets or fares in the metropolitan area, but it would never be noticed. The amount of the reduction would be so small, relatively to the fares now being charged, that the individual would never know he had had the benefit of it. Nothing less than a reduction of 25 or 33 per cent. would be appreciable; and then the Government would lose £27,000 in a direction where they could ill afford the loss. Before any reduction is made in respect of a twopenny or sixpenny railway ticket, the man outback who has to carry his goods hundreds of miles over the railways and then anything from 50 up to a couple of hundred miles by team in order to carry on an industry essential to the very life of this community, should receive consideration. The member for Guildford (Mr. Davies) suggests that if we do not reduce suburban fares, the motor buses will take all the metropolitan traffic away from the railways. If the motors can run in competition with the railways and give a better service at a cheaper rate, the workers have nothing to complain about. Let

them use the motors. But the Railway Department cannot pay a living wage to its employees and work the railways and maintain the system if a substantial reduction is made.

Mr. Heron: There should be a higher tax on motors.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We must ask the users of the railways to pay a reasonable return for the service rendered. All the Australian railway systems are in the same position as regards motor competition.

Mr. Marshall: No railway system in any part of the world can compete with motors over a short distance.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not propose to discuss the matter further, except to add that a lot could be done if we had unlimited funds available. Under the conditions prevailing we can do no more than see the financial year out. If at the end of the current financial year we balance the railway ledger, then we ought to consider the question of reductions in charges. In the meantime, I am afraid, the existing state of affairs must continue.

Item, Chief Traffic Manager, £876:

Hon. P. COLLIER: The general discussion having closed, I have a few words to offer in connection with the traffic branch. I do not wish to pursue at length the question of the Commissioner's action with regard to the new coal agreement. I have listened to the Commissioner's explanation as just delivered by the Minister, and I read what I took to be an explanation from the Commissioner in the leading article published by the "West Australian" this morning. Notwithstanding what has been stated I see no reason whatever to alter or withdraw one word of what I uttered on Tuesday evening.

The Minister for Mines: I would not expect you to do that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If a case could be put up I would be prepared to alter my statements. However, I assert that nothing has been said by the Minister, and that, in spite of this morning's leading article, nothing has been printed which would call for the alteration of any man's opinion as expressed two days ago in this Chamber. It is true that on two points there was no change of policy. The question of wages could not be affected or altered by the Commissioner or the Minister. The question of the allocation of orders amongst the various companies was determined at a conference three years ago, and it was generally accepted by all concerned. There was no desire to alter that arrangement either on the part of the Railway Department or the others concerned.

The Minister for Mines: It was reviewed in August of this year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Notwithstanding that, the Commissioner had no right to sign the contract without reference to the Minister. For that reason alone, irrespective of the question of policy, he should not

have done so. There were two important alterations in the agreement as compared with the one submitted to the Minister, and approved three years ago. I regret that the clause which provides for three months' notice in the event of the cancellation of the agreement, was omitted, for that clause was most vital and important.

The Minister for Mines: It does not apply to both.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was in the agreement made three years ago, and it gave the right to either side to cancel the agreement after three month's notice. The Commissioner has omitted that clause and he should have consulted the Minister on that point. In signing up the agreement without that clause the Commissioner failed to protect the interests of the State.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The "West Australian" this morning claimed that the old agreement had given rise to much trouble, and assumed that the new agreement was perfect. They also assumed that the Commissioner had really protected the interests of the State, inasmuch as he had assured for the railways a safe supply of coal for the next three years. The suggestion was that the Commissioner had tied the companies up by assuring the three years' supply under an agreement from which the company could not escape. That is absurd. It is the Commissioner who has tied himself up, and not the company.

The Minister for Mines: Nothing of the sort. The Commissioner has not tied himself up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There was no need to make an agreement with the company. The Railway Department is really in a position to dictate terms to the company at any time.

The Minister for Mines: No it is not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Sixty per cent. of the output is distributed through the Railway Department. What justification has the Commissioner for assuming that experience will not develop similar, or other difficulties, with regard to the new agreement? It has been said that the old agreement was unsatisfactory to both parties, and that it has been constantly referred to during two and a half years. What justification there is for that I do not know, nor what justification there is for the assumption that the Commissioner has now secured an agreement regarding which no fault whatever can be found. What is the basis for the assumption, so far as his general knowledge, ability and judgment are concerned regarding the handling of contracts of this kind, that it will be faultless for the next three years? Yet there will be no escape from it. Experience of years gone by shows that there has been grumbling and continual disagreement.

The Minister for Mines: There is provision made in the event of any difficulty arising in connection with the agreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For what?

The Minister for Mines: For reference to an arbitrator, who is named.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They always had that clause. Under the old agreement there was provision for the settlement of disputes by arbitration, and the only alteration is to substitute the Inspector of Mines at Collie for the former arbitrator. Talk about the Commissioner assuring a supply of coal for the next three years! His supply is assured even if there were no agreement at all. The department carried on from 1915 to 1920 without any agreement.

The Minister for Mines: They did not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, they did.

The Minister for Mines: It was by mutual arrangement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There were times when Mr. Short, as Commissioner for Railways, did not desire to have any agreement. He wanted to be free to negotiate with the companies from month to month, or from year to year, according to the alterations necessary for the working of the department. Now, no matter how harmful or disadvantageous this agreement may prove to be during the next three years, the Commissioner is tied down to it.

The Minister for Mines: It will not be harmful. Why do you assume it will be?

Hon. P. COLLIER: From past experience. The Minister knows perfectly well that there has been continual friction in connection with other agreements with the Railway Department. This matter was a source of infinite worry to me when I was in charge of the Railway Department. Matters connected with Collie coal and the contracts were constantly cropping up. Despite the experience of the past few years, we are now told that this is a perfect agreement.

The Minister for Mines: They do not say that.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the agreement was drawn up three years ago, the expert opinion available in the department was brought to bear in framing it. They considered it was satisfactory from the departmental point of view. The department drafted it without much consultation with the company at the time. It was submitted subsequently to the Government and later on to the company. Mr. Lynn, in accepting it, said he was doubtful about it. He did not discuss it very much, but at the time he said he was doubtful whether it could be carried out. Both parties now say that that agreement was unsatisfactory and did not work smoothly at all. After that experience during the three-year period, what justification has the Commissioner for urging that perfection has been reached in this agreement? From the standpoint of ordinary business precaution he should have retained that saving clause regarding the notice of termination of the agreement, because anything may develop within six months, a year, or two years. No harm could come from making provision

as I have suggested. If the contractor exercised his right under the agreement and cancelled it, the Commissioner would have three months in which to negotiate a new agreement with the company. If at any time the contractor decided to do that, the Commissioner would not be at a disadvantage, and therefore in this respect he would hold the key to the situation, in that the companies would be compelled, by force of circumstances, to yield largely to his wishes in the matter because dependent on him for the disposal of at least 60 per cent. of their coal. From a business point of view there is no justification for the omission of that clause. Three years ago the Commissioner, in a minute instructing the Chief Mechanical Engineer to prepare a draft, specially directed that provision should be made for 20 per cent. of our requirements being left out of the contract. In the event of new mines being discovered, and having regard to the possibility of briquetting and of pulverised coal, he desired to have the margin of 20 per cent. so that he might allocate that percentage to anything that might develop. Since then the Mines Department has spent £3,816 in boring on the Irwin field.

The Minister for Mines: What have they got?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know the quality of the coal is not very promising, but the men at work there happen to be constituents of mine, four miners from Boulder.

The Minister for Mines: They certainly cannot produce much coal during the next three years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Possibly not, but a six months' option has been taken over it by a man associated with the management of one of the Kalgoorlie mines. He is endeavouring to raise capital in Melbourne.

The Minister for Railways: Anyhow, they will have a ready market in the Midland Railway Company.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. They might easily turn out more coal than the Midland Company would want to take from them. However, I am not saying that the appearance of the Irwin field at present indicates that they will be raising coal during the currency of the agreement. But on the Wilga field the Mines Department have spent over £8,000 in boring for coal. There is on the file a newspaper clipping showing the result of the boring, and that promising seams have been cut. The report is dated the 2nd August, 1923. According to it, they were about to float a company to open up the mines. If they should be able to do that, it would not take three years, for the mines could be opened up in 12 months.

The Minister for Mines: No, ask the member for Collie.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe he will agree with me. A tremendous amount of work can be done in 12 months. Suppose a coal superior to Collie coal were to be found in the Geraldton district. Under the terms of the agreement the department would still have to

haul the inferior coal all the way from Collie right up to Geraldton. It is only a business precaution that the Commissioner should be protected in that respect. If a new coalfield were discovered it would put the Railway Department in a better position to negotiate with the old firms; so it would have been only an ordinary business precaution to have observed that 20 per cent. margin. The Commissioner himself thought so three years ago, and the prospects of finding a new field are brighter to-day than they were then.

The Minister for Mines: Except at Wilga, there is no advantage in opening up new mines of the same class of coal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There might be considerable advantage to the Railway Department, because it might mean getting coal 1s. a ton cheaper.

The Minister for Mines: That cannot be done, for the price is already fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But if the new company were willing to take less.

The Minister for Mines: It would not matter. Ask the member for Collie again.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The coal tribunal can say, "You have to pay a certain price for the coal"; that is what they have done. But if a company say, "We do not want that; we will take 1s. less," the tribunal could not compel the company to accept the extra 1s.

The Minister for Mines: No, but the men at Collie would not permit of any reduction.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister, surely, does not hold that there is no advantage in the opening up of more coalfields!

The Minister for Mines: There is no advantage in opening up more fields in the same place.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, even in the same place, of course it is an advantage. The Minister knows that the price of coal has been forced up since there has been a monopoly.

The Minister for Mines: I like that! After the member for Collie has taken credit for having brought about an increase in price, you are now blaming the company.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The company were associated in it. The directors went to Melbourne.

The Minister for Mines: The member for Collie knows what happened.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know the company were keen on getting the increase.

The Minister for Mines: The men got it just the same.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The company got an increase, and the men got an increase. Does the Minister say that a body established because of conditions arising out of the war can keep going for ever? I should like to know why that body is still in existence.

The Minister for Mines: It is nothing to do with me.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but I ask why there should still be in existence a body appointed because of war conditions? Is it to remain a permanent institution? Why have we not got back to tendering in open competition, as before the war? Why are the

coal owners, both here and in the Eastern States, protected by regulations issued to meet war necessities?

The Minister for Mines: The men are protected by that tribunal just as much as are the coal companies.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I agree.

The Minister for Mines: Well, say it that way. Don't half say it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not. Why are the companies and the men not back to pre-war conditions?

Mr. Wilson: Why not the gold miners in the same way?

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have never had the same protection.

Mr. Wilson: They got an increase in wages.

Hon. P. COLLIER: From the Arbitration Court; but this is a tribunal that fixes the price of coal.

The Minister for Mines: On which the wages of the men are fixed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know.

The Minister for Mines: There is not so much protection for the company as there is for the men.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Probably they are fifty-fifty in it. We know perfectly well that if the wage earner can get an increase of wages or a coal owner an increase for his commodity, he will get it. That is only human nature.

The Minister for Mines: I know the coal miners well enough to say they will not permit an increase in any other circumstances.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If that is the attitude it is of no use opening up a new field. Why is the Minister throwing away £5,800 of Government funds in looking for a new field? What advantage will it be to the State to open up a new field?

The Minister for Mines: We are looking for better coal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And the Minister has not found it yet. He does not know whether a better coal will be struck in the next three years. Suppose coal was struck of a quality equal to Newcastle, the Commissioner for Railways would not be permitted to take a ton of it. The Commissioner is not justified in assuming there is no better coal in the State. If at Wilga coal were struck equal to the quality of Newcastle coal, the Commissioner would be helpless. He is committed to this agreement for three years and can take nothing else.

The Minister for Mines: You are looking at possibilities.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Any man making a contract must look at the possibilities. Even a man running a little shop must consider all the possibilities and protect himself in the event of the unlikely happening. More particularly would he protect himself when he had nothing at all to gain by agreeing to that provision. The Commissioner had nothing to gain by agreeing to that provision.

The Minister for Mines: He thinks he had.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has failed to show it and the article in this morning's newspaper fails to show it.

The Minister for Mines: He is losing nothing and your proposal would make it difficult with the miners at Collie.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Nobody can say whether he is losing anything, but there is a possibility of his losing something. What nonsense it is to say that coal superior to Collie coal will not be discovered in Western Australia in the next three years! That is what the Commissioner is banking on.

The Minister for Mines: It is equally nonsense to say a better coal will be discovered in three years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Nothing of the kind. Until the results of the boring at Wilga were known, the Minister had no idea whether the quality of the coal was inferior or superior to that of Collie coal.

The Minister for Mines: We know now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister does not know that better coal will not be struck. The Commissioner had nothing to gain by agreeing to that provision. He did not benefit one iota. He has taken considerable risk by omitting a clause providing for the cancellation of the agreement. There is not one word in the eyewitness appearing in the "West Australian" this morning to justify the omission of a clause to terminate the agreement. To insist upon such a clause was an ordinary business precaution that any man should have taken. Seeing that two alterations were made in the contract, it was the duty of the Commissioner to consult the Minister. Even though the agreement was largely on the lines of the previous agreement in other respects, it is not an unimportant matter to sign up a contract involving an expenditure of £230,000 a year for three years. Surely such a contract was worthy of a telephone message to the Minister!

The Minister for Mines: He had to get the coal whether he made a contract to spend the money or not. The amount of money is not involved.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Commissioner might have kept the Minister informed of what was going on. The fact of the Commissioner having acted otherwise does not indicate a proper relationship between him and the Minister. The Minister should have heard of the new contract before it was mentioned in this House. The Commissioner should not have placed his Minister in the position of being told by a man in the street of something affecting his own department.

The Minister for Mines: You got hold of it before I did; that is all, and it is not an unusual thing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not get hold of it until three weeks after the agreement was completed.

The Minister for Mines: You got hold of it before I did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Minister should have known of this contract before it was

completed. Three years ago he was consulted at every stage of the agreement.

The Minister for Mines: No, I was not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister was.

The Minister for Mines: Not on the question of policy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, the Minister knew everything. This year the Commissioner ignored him. He has signed up a contract, and it will be miraculous if it works smoothly and without giving rise to complaint for three years, seeing that the previous agreement gave rise to so much controversy. The old agreement was responsible for a claim against the department for £12,000, which was ultimately compromised and settled by the payment of £3,250. As a result of the difference between the department and the company, notice was given to cancel the agreement. Yet the Commissioner now assumes he has reached the very acme of knowledge in the drawing up of agreements. Nothing of the kind will occur again. This agreement is perfection itself. It will work smoothly. There can be no possible reason for either him or the company desiring to cancel it. That is the attitude he is assuming. If he was given some genuine advantage to compensate for the omission of that clause, he might be justified.

The Minister for Mines: He claims that he is.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But there is not one scrap of proof of that.

The Minister for Mines: That is only your opinion. His opinion differs.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am as capable as is the Commissioner of judging the worth of an argument. The best case that has been put up for the Commissioner was that set out in the "West Australian" this morning.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know that he is responsible for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think he must have been. It is almost word for word with the case cited by the Minister. I say nothing about that. The "West Australian" heard my side and, after having perused the files, would be justified in getting the views of the other side. Having got the views of the Commissioner, they were justified in working up the best possible case. But there is not one word in the argument that justifies the omission of a clause giving power to cancel the contract. The "West Australian" says the Commissioner has made a good deal, in that he is sure of a constant supply of coal for the next three years. Anyone with a knowledge of the industry knows that is merely eyewash for the benefit of the public, because there can be no doubt in any circumstances whatsoever as to the security of the department in obtaining coal for the next three years or even the next 30 years. What else could the companies do but supply coal? The Commissioner could get his coal at any time. If the clause had been included, and the contract was cancelled six or 12 months hence, the companies would not close down their mines, but would negotiate for a new agreement.

The department could not suffer by the taking of precautions in the making of this contract. On these two points the Commissioner has failed lamentably to justify his action and protect the interests of the State.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: My definite opinion is that the Commissioner of Railways has not failed.

Hon. P. Collier: That is your opinion.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, and the hon. member is entitled to hold his. After careful consideration I take the view that the Commissioner has not failed. He has made an agreement that will serve well the department he is administering, and for which he is answerable to Parliament. If it does not have this effect, he will still have to answer for it.

Hon. P. Collier: It will be too late then.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That is all bunkum.

Hon. P. Collier: It is not.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Too many people want to pre-judge a man, instead of giving him an opportunity to prove his worth. The Leader of the Opposition has waxed eloquent and wrathful over something he does not thoroughly understand.

Hon. P. Collier: It is only an ordinary business precaution, and I have the past three years' experience to guide me.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member can have the past 30 years' experience behind him. When the matter is finalised and the Commissioner can answer for what he has done, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will find he has been wrong in pre-judging him in this matter.

Hon. P. Collier: But it is an ordinary business precaution.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commissioner has stated definitely that on the advice of men who ought to know all about the details, he has made an agreement satisfactory to the department.

Hon. P. Collier: The file does not show that anyone advised him on this question.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not care what the file shows. That is what the Commissioner told me.

Hon. P. Collier: The minute on the file says he has made a favourable agreement in regard to price.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The Leader of the Opposition has his opinion, and I have mine. We differ, that is all. He contends that the Commissioner should never have made a contract for three years.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say that.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: At all events, without consulting his Minister.

Hon. P. Collier: Or with this clause in the agreement.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If the Commissioner had consulted me, I should probably have taken the matter to Cabinet to ascertain their views as to whether it was desirable, in the face of the knowledge we have, to make a three years' agreement.

But the Commissioner made the agreement, and must carry the responsibility for doing so. He is being paid £2,000 a year to carry this responsibility. If it is proved at the end of 12 months that what he anticipated has not happened, it will show that he has either been badly advised by those officers who are paid to advise him, or that he has misjudged the position. It is not fair, however, to continually pre-judge a man who is holding so responsible a position as he is.

Hon. P. Collier: This is not pre-judging him. I am judging him by the past.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The conditions of the past agreement are entirely different.

Hon. P. Collier: I am judging by what he has done, not by what he may do.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is pre-judging him on the new agreement.

Hon. P. Collier: How can I? I am criticising the new agreement, but that is not pre-judging him. This is what has been done under the new agreement.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: This was prepared on the advice of the men who ought to be able to tell him something of the matter. He made this new arrangement for the fixing of the basis on which he shall pay for his coals, and their relative values in the mines. He may be right or wrong.

Hon. P. Collier: The files do not show that he obtained any such advice.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The agreement provides—

The above price is based on the mining rate and conditions now current at Collic, and any increase or decrease in the present cost of production due to changes made by Government or other competent authority, of whatever kind, which enters into the cost of production or preparation of the said coal shall be added to or deducted from the price herein fixed.

Hon. P. Collier: That is all in regard to the price.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That surely affects the position of the three years' contract. "Who knows," said the Leader of the Opposition, "whether there will not be the same troubles under this agreement as occurred under the old agreement?" If this is not definite enough I do not know what is, for the agreement says—

If any question or difference shall arise between the parties hereto or their respective representatives touching these presents or the construction thereof or as to the rights, duties, or obligations of any person thereunder, or as to any other matter in anywise arising out of or connected with the subject matter of these presents, the same shall be referred to the arbitration of the Inspector of Mines at Collic whose decision, interim or final, shall be binding on all parties.

Hon. P. Collier: There was exactly the same paragraph in the last agreement, and yet the company found it necessary to cancel it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) can tell the Leader of the Opposition about that. It did not have the same definite wording in regard to arriving at the calorific value of the coal.

Hon. P. Collier: It is precisely the same wording as to arbitration. Any matters in dispute were to be referred to arbitration. Notwithstanding that, the company found it necessary to cancel the agreement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They were within their rights in doing so.

Hon. P. Collier: In the interests of the company.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: On this matter I am entirely in disagreement with the Leader of the Opposition. The Commissioner has made a bargain that is satisfactory to all parties. The Leader of the Opposition must remember it is not a question of the railways or the companies alone; it is a question of the men engaged in the industry as well. I challenge him, in the presence of the member for Collie, to quote a single instance, since I have been in Parliament, when I have not always guarded the interests of the men engaged in the industry.

Hon. P. Collier: That is apart from my point. It has nothing to do with the agreement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It has a lot to do with the agreement. I suggest the Leader of the Opposition should discuss this question with the miners' union at Collie and see what they think.

Hon. P. Collier: The miners' union did not ask for the elimination of the clause I am dealing with.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I warn the hon. member he will find they will approve of it.

Hon. P. Collier: They do not care whether it is in or out.

Mr. Lutey: No fear.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not fearing anything. I know the temper of the men at Collie. They will prefer to be on a substantial basis with three years' work ahead of them. When dealing with the traffic question I omitted to mention the matter referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie, following upon the motion he moved but withdrew, in connection with the Wooroloo Sanatorium. This deals with concessions to relatives of patients in the Wooroloo Sanatorium. In respect to persons travelling from the country to the Wooroloo Sanatorium, arrangements have been made whereby the husband, wife, parent, or child of any patient may travel to Perth (there being no accommodation at Wooroloo) by paying ordinary single fare, and, on production of certificate signed by the Medical Officer at the Sanatorium, a return ticket will be granted free of cost. This concession will be allowed only once per quarter except in the case of the serious illness of a patient, when a certificate may be issued at the discretion of medical officer. This means that the relatives of any

inmate in the Wooroloo Sanatorium in the person of the husband, wife, parent, or child may travel from any point on the railway system to Wooroloo by paying the ordinary single fare. At Wooroloo they will require to get a certificate from the doctor that they have visited the patient or relative, and, on that certificate being presented to the Railway Department, a free pass will be granted to enable them to return to their homes. This will be given once a quarter. In the case of a serious illness or the patient being in a dangerous condition, and these people being called upon to go to the Sanatorium by order of the medical officer, similar conditions will prevail, although they may have had such a concession given to them only the week before.

Hon. P. Collier: That means a return journey for a single fare?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hardly think the Minister dealt fully with the question touched upon by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Minister for Mines: Oh, very well!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know something of what took place. I spent a little time in Collie and endeavoured to find out how the position stood there. The objection of the Leader of the Opposition to the agreement deals with the question of the cancellation of the contract. He says there is no opportunity, if any new coal mine is opened up, of the Railway Department taking supplies from it or from any other mines than those mentioned in the agreement. It has been the custom for some time for Cabinet to deal with a matter of this kind. If hon. members look at the file they will see that the first draft agreement sent to the Commissioner of Railways contemplates cancellation.

The Minister for Mines: The Commissioner admits that.

Hon. P. Collier: That should have justified his communicating with you.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hold that the cancellation clause should have remained. Either party might find occasion to cancel the contract. The Commissioner may eventually find himself in such circumstances as will render it necessary to cancel the contract. I admit that conditions now are somewhat different from the conditions of a few years ago, when there were six companies operating at Collie. To-day there are only two. If another mine is discovered there will be no possibility of the Government assisting that mine by taking supplies from it, as might be to the advantage of the department. I feel sure that if the Minister were out of his present chair, either on this side of the House or the opposite side, he would hold the view I am now expressing, that the contract should contain a clause permitting cancellation if necessary.

The Minister for Mines: If it is necessary to cancel the contract, that will be done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The omission in question should not have been made.

Mr. WILSON: Perhaps I can throw a little light on the matter of the allocation. A conference was held at Perth as I have previously mentioned. At that conference there were three union representatives who were interested in a coal mine at Collie, and how it came about that those men did not safeguard their interests I am quite unable to understand. You, Mr. Munsie, were present at that conference. The three men in question, Messrs. Close, McCulloch, and Whittaker, had an interest in the coal mine owned by the Griffin Syndicate, and yet they, either deliberately or unconsciously, have cut that mine out for three years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They had nothing to do with the making of the agreement.

Mr. WILSON: But they had to do with the making of the allocation.

The Minister for Mines: That is the point. It affects very seriously the men working in the mines, from the aspect of stability. That is why they insist on the allocation to the Premier mine.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I put in two days discussing the matter with the men. They are concerned only about the percentage each mine should have.

The Minister for Mines: It affects them seriously because of the number of years they have been working in those mines.

Mr. WILSON: I have here minutes of a conference held on the 17th August last and presided over by Mr. Munsie, M.L.A. On page 16 of the minutes I find the following:

The Commissioner: How would this be, to leave the Premier at 13, Cardiff 14, two 20's and a 33?

Mr. Lowry: The Commissioner's suggestion would not be a bad one.

The Commissioner: I think everybody understands that. Is that acceptable to the miners?

What I cannot understand is that the miners agreed to this while they themselves had a mine open for working. I do not know who is to blame in the matter, but I do not think it was ever intended that the 20 per cent. clause should be omitted. The present position as has already been pointed out, is that a new mine has no chance. There is as much difference between opening a coal mine and opening a gold mine as there is between chalk and cheese. I would guarantee to open a coal mine in Collie to produce 100 or 200 tons per day within six months. The coal at Collie and at Wilga comes practically up to the surface. Thirty feet from the surface one gets coal. The Griffin Syndicate could produce coal in six months. However, as these men did not look after their own interests, they can hardly blame anybody but themselves.

The Minister for Mines: From a miner's point of view, what would be the value of opening a new mine at Collie?

Mr. WILSON: The 20 per cent. clause should have been left in. One never knows

what is going to happen. One of the existing mines might be lost.

Mr. HUGHES: On the question of traffic, the Minister read a statement which purported to show that although there had been a decrease in the basic wage, there had been an increase in the earnings of the men. We know as a fact that because of retrenchment in the railway service during the early part of the year, it was necessary to put men on overtime during the latter part of the year.

The Minister for Mines: That always applies. The position this year is not different from the position in any other year.

Mr. HUGHES: I say the position is different. The Minister knows that boilermakers were put off in the shops and that recently boilermakers have been put on overtime to catch up with the work left undone because of the retrenchment.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know anything of the sort. You are talking moonshine.

Mr. HUGHES: I know the men were working overtime, because we have had complaints from the unions on that score.

The Minister for Mines: Because there were no other boilermakers to employ.

Mr. HUGHES: The boilermakers were retrenched in the early part of the year.

The Minister for Mines: We had more work in the boilermakers' shop last year than ever before.

Mr. HUGHES: And as a result of the retrenchment, the boilermakers now in the service are working overtime. A statement was made to me by a loco. man who had been retrenched, and he pointed out that as a result of his dismissal the Government had had to engage men and pay them the away-from-home allowance and overtime to perform work that he usually did. To ascertain if there was any truth in the representations made to me, I had a return laid on the Table of the House showing what away-from-home allowances and overtime had been paid by the Railway Department. We find one man, in addition to his ordinary pay, earned £30 in overtime and away-from-home allowances in two months.

The Minister for Mines: In isolated cases that may be so.

Mr. HUGHES: It is true that the man referred to was on an engine that had been hired to someone else but that £30 is taken into account in the Minister's figures as the earnings of that man so as to ascertain his average wage. That is not an isolated case. There are seven or eight sheets of foolscap paper dealing with men earning from £20 downwards. There are nearly 600 instances. This means that all these overtime and away-from-home payments have been taken into account in the Minister's figures. I asked him definitely, by way of interjection, whether they were included but he would not answer me. The only inference to be drawn is that they are included. What is the use, therefore, of saying that although the basic wage decreased, the earnings of the railway em-

ployees have not decreased. Taken literally, of course, the statement is true, but what is the inference that goes out to the public? It is that the wages of the men have not really been reduced. On the other hand, if all these men have had to work overtime and receive away-from-home allowances in order to make up for the effects of the retrenchment, it means that they have really suffered a reduction. That is not sound retrenchment. It may be replied that the overtime and allowance is a complicated matter and that a layman cannot understand it without having a close knowledge of this particular calling. Despite that fact, it seems to me as a layman, that the number of men who have to do this work is unduly high. I am willing to be corrected on that point if I am wrong. The fact that seven or eight sheets of foolscap are taken up with the record of these payments shows that the retrenchment was not warranted. There is another point to be considered; washaways occurred and some of the loco. drivers and firemen had to be paid big sums for overtime. Those payments also have gone to swell the Minister's figures. It is not correct, therefore, for the Minister to say that though the basic wage has been reduced there has been no reduction in the men's wages. There must be a reduction in these circumstances.

The Minister for Mines: You are talking a lot of tripe. I will show you later on.

Mr. HUGHES: You always talk tripe. There must be a reduction, if there is a reduction in the basic wage. I doubt very much whether the Minister can show that that is not so.

The Minister for Mines: Sit down and I will show you.

Mr. HUGHES: I will sit down when I am ready.

The Minister for Mines: Very well, then, I will not show you; you can find out for yourself.

Mr. HUGHES: You can please yourself, but you cannot ram that statement down my throat.

The Minister for Mines: I want to show you, but you will not sit down.

Mr. HUGHES: You can do so when I do sit down. The Minister's statement was only partially true and his figures apparently included these amounts for overtime and away-from-home allowance.

The Minister for Mines: You know all about it.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister has not a monopoly of knowledge. The deficit proves that.

The Minister for Mines: I know a lot about some other things.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister has not had all the knowledge and the State is paying for it now.

The Minister for Mines: I know something about a sweep and what they paid for your knowledge.

Mr. HUGHES: That sweep paid well and if the Minister is making an insinuation it is a lie.

The Minister for Mines: It is so much like what comes from you.

Mr. HUGHES: It is a contemptible insinuation to come from a man who has had such a rotten career as the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Not so rotten as your own.

Mr. HUGHES: There is nothing in the State to compare with the Minister's.

The Minister for Mines: Not by a long way!

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister's career is one series of these things since 1910, and he has been charged with them.

Hon. P. Collier: Mostly by his own associates.

Mr. HUGHES: They came from the Weld Club and from other places. Now he indulges in the same sort of thing.

The Minister for Mines: It matters not where they came from.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, it does.

The Minister for Mines: I have some knowledge of that sweep anyhow.

Mr. HUGHES: Now the Minister is indulging in insinuations. What does he mean?

The Minister for Mines: I am talking of the expenses in connection with that sweep.

Mr. HUGHES: What do you mean? What do you know?

The Minister for Mines: A lot.

Mr. HUGHES: What did it cost?

The Minister for Mines: It cost £300 and they got £90.

Mr. HUGHES: And they paid £200 in prizes.

The Minister for Mines: How much did the hall get?

Mr. HUGHES: Nearly £100. Try to be honest for once! It is damned hard for you, I know.

The Minister for Mines: That is good, coming from you!

Mr. HUGHES: I have watched your career for 20 years.

The Minister for Mines: What of that?

Mr. HUGHES: I have watched you all right.

The Minister for Mines: You keep on watching. It will be mutual.

Mr. HUGHES: Here is the Minister who has made assertions against his own colleagues; made rotten insinuations about them.

The Minister for Mines: There was no rotten insinuation.

Mr. HUGHES: Notwithstanding that the Minister had the signed balance-sheet in his office, signed by an official auditor under the head of his department, he can make that insinuation and he knows it is a lie. He wanted a rotten inference to be drawn.

The Minister for Mines: I merely stated facts. I say it cost a lot to get a little money.

Mr. HUGHES: Why don't you tell the truth?

The Minister for Mines: Is that not the truth?

Mr. HUGHES: There is no doubt about what the Minister suggested. He suggested that I ran a sweep and got something out of it.

The Minister for Mines: I give you my absolute assurance that I did nothing of the sort. I know different from that.

Mr. HUGHES: What do you say?

The Minister for Mines: I say that it cost a lot to run the sweep and that they got little out of it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot allow a discussion of this kind. We are dealing with the Railway Estimates. I hope members will remember that. I cannot let the member for East Perth proceed along these lines.

Mr. HUGHES: I think you ought to.

The CHAIRMAN: I will not allow it any longer, either by the Minister or by the member for East Perth. I will block any further discussion. If the member for East Perth continues along these lines I will rule him out of order and I will rule the Minister out of order if he continues to interject.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister is not going to get away with any such statement as he has made. I will not have him saying that sort of thing without having a chance to reply to him. We know what he said. I heard what he said about the late Frank Wilson. I was in the gallery and heard him.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This must not continue.

Mr. HUGHES: I heard him call the Minister for Works a "sandbagger."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to discuss the Estimates.

The Minister for Mines: I did not do any such thing.

Mr. HUGHES: You can look in "Hansard." I heard you classify the Minister for Works as a "sandbagger," and he is one of your own colleagues in the Ministry now.

The Minister for Works: What has this to do with the Estimates?

Mr. HUGHES: When a Minister has the signed audited balance-sheet in his office and is low enough to make such an insinuation, nothing can be too bad to make use of when replying to him.

The Minister for Mines: I say I never cast any insinuation against you. I said it cost a lot of money to get a little. With the knowledge I have, I would not make such an insinuation. It was never in my mind.

Mr. HUGHES: If the Minister makes his statement outside, I can prove the position to him.

The Minister for Mines: I know that. I have the balance-sheet.

Mr. HUGHES: Why did you say that, seeing that you had the balance-sheet and had proof concerning the sweep?

The Minister for Mines: I have told you.

Mr. HUGHES: You spoke about the same thing to-day, about people impugning the honour of others.

The Minister for Mines: I am not charging you with dishonesty, either. I give my assurance of that.

Mr. HUGHES: Well I will accept the assurance. It ought to be clearly defined whether these figures include overtime.

The Minister for Mines: I will tell you if you give me a chance.

12 o'clock midnight.

Mr. HUGHES: I wish to refer to the statement made by the member for Beverley (Hon. F. T. Broun) respecting the traffic during three months of the year. Because there is heavy traffic at that season, the revenue exceeds the expenditure. But that is no indication of the true state of affairs. The maintenance has to go on over the twelve months. Simply because during certain months the earnings are in excess of expenditure, we are told the railways are making a profit and so, actually, no concessions are given to the farmers. The hon. member said there was a heavy freight on wool. But the wool industry is well able to stand it, the incomes of the pastoralists averaging over £3,000. When the Minister says that those who can pay should pay, I agree with him. That principle should be applied every time.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member reads the annual report of the Railways for 1923 he will find these figures: Wages staff, 1922, average per man per annum, £222 17s. 6d. In 1923, £222 17s. 11d. A footnote reads, "Exclusive of overtime and Sunday time." That is what the hon. member was asking for.

Mr. LUTEY: Some time ago complaints were made regarding the time table on the Brown Hill loop line. It was impracticable to run a sufficient number of trains, but a suggestion was made that petrol coaches should be installed. We were informed that experiments were being tried in the South-West with those coaches, and that if they proved satisfactory more coaches would be secured sufficiently powerful to haul a trailer and be used on the Brown Hill loop line. I should like to know how the experiments have turned out.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I agree with the hon. member that if any place lends itself especially to the running of motor coaches, it is the Brown Hill loop line. But we obtained only three coaches, and after a little time discovered that we could not possibly keep the three on traffic continuously; that if anything happened one we required to replace it. So we have to keep on as a standby. In view of that, we require half a dozen of them. On that basis the overhead charge of one standing idle would be spread over six instead of three. We propose to get more of them, and when they are obtained they will be tried on the Brown Hill loop line.

Mr. MARSHALL: In my opinion the pooling of engines on the system is not the best policy. From casual conversations with drivers and firemen I have found that there is no proper supervision of the engine. An engine starting from, say, Northam and running to the first change point has to run without attention to little repairs, the attitude of the crew being, "So long as we can get her through our section, it is all right." So,

when the engine is handed over to the next crew, it is in want of attention. But the next crew treat it in exactly the same way, each sectional crew passing on the repairs to the next. So, too, the waits at the end of each section for raking fires, taking in water, coaling and the like, mean considerable delays. All this might be economical to the department, but in my opinion it does not tend to the good working of the system. The old system of each party having their own engine was the better one.

The Minister for Works: The present system is best of all. I myself introduced it, and it has proved all right.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister is a human encyclopædia. The present system does not tend to give economical and efficient service. When I first started travelling over the railways a different system was in force. So, even if the Minister did introduce the present one, it was tried and discredited, and has only been brought in again quite recently. It does not give satisfaction to even the men.

The Minister for Works: Do not the men do their duty?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, but one engine running a long journey is under a great strain. Moreover it cannot get the attention it would if it stopped with the driver and fireman at the end of the section. It is not their own engine; it is nobody's engine in particular. The Minister has been Commissioner of Railways, but he has never been a driver.

The Minister for Works: I drove before you were born, or your parents either.

Mr. MARSHALL: You have been driving all your life perhaps, but there is one you can never drive, and it is me.

The Minister for Works: I should like to drive you.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not in a position to deal with a matter of that kind, but I shall ask the Commissioner to obtain from the officer in charge of the department the reason for that system.

Mr. Heron: It has been adopted only recently.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Tramways, £218,000:*

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [12.11]: I do not wish to be discourteous, but there is really nothing fresh to mention regarding tramways. The question of extensions and improvements to the system can be dealt with under the Loan Estimates where the money will be provided.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [12.12]: The Minister should give attention to the tramway system of Perth, because it appears to me a fair number of dead trams are being run. I cannot understand why the Perth system should cost any more to run than does that at Fremantle. In Perth, after paying interest without sinking

fund, the trams last year showed a surplus of £15,895. The amount of working expenditure includes £7,553, payment to the local authorities in accordance with Section 8 of the Tramways Purchase Act. Therefore the surplus was £8,342. I realise that on the capital expenditure a very small amount of sinking fund is provided, approximately half per cent. If the Fremantle trams had the same capital expenditure that Perth has, instead of their showing a surplus of £15,895, the amount would be £59,250. No depreciation is provided for the Perth trams.

Mr. McCallum: No wonder we have worn out trams.

The Minister for Mines: The rolling stock is in much better condition than it ever has been.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is being maintained; all tramway systems have to do that. Per car mile working expenses in Perth are ¼d. heavier than at Fremantle, and the Fremantle Board pay their men 6d. per day more than the men in Perth receive. That shows there is a good deal of dead running in Perth. I know the difficulty, and that is why I am asking the Minister to look into the matter.

Mr. McCallum: Do you pay more for current at Fremantle?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, we pay less, but we are paying more than the difference on maintenance. Last year Perth spent 3.12d. per car mile on maintenance, whereas Fremantle spent 4.58d., so that one would balance the other. The total working expenses of the Perth trams was 18.53d., while the total working expenses at Fremantle was 17.783d. That difference can be accounted for only by dead running.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think you have the big traffic at Fremantle that we have in Perth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And having that, there should not be the dead running that occurs on a smaller system. More people travel into the city continually than would travel into a smaller town. In addition the men at Fremantle are paid 6d. a day more than are those in Perth. I wish to warn the Minister to be careful about running trams where there is a railway near at hand, merely to provide additional means of communication. If he does that, the working expenses will mount considerably higher than they are at present. I know of no better comparison than Fremantle offers. North Fremantle has a railway; East Fremantle has no railway. During the 12 months the number of passengers carried on the North Fremantle line was only 426,696, because a large number of people used the railway. On the East Fremantle line the number of passengers carried was 1,961,574, or nearly five times as many.

The Minister for Mines: Naturally the railway would carry some.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I think the experience at Claremont will be the same.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think we shall get heavy traffic on the trams from Claremont into Perth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There will be a good deal of dead running.

The Minister for Mines: No there will not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The trams will be running with very few passengers, or if they carry passengers, they will be robbing the railway.

The Minister for Mines: Where we shall gain at Claremont will be in carrying passengers from the station to Bay View-terrace.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It will pay the Government much better to run trams where there are no trains. Even if the traffic is not great, the increase will be considerable, because the trams will carry the whole of the traffic, instead of having to divide it with a railway. If trams are run in conjunction or almost side by side with railways, the same thing will happen as has happened in Fremantle. People will take the railway in preference to the tram. On the railways they get monthly workers' tickets and can travel more cheaply. For single journeys the trams are cheaper, but in Fremantle the cost is approximately the same. A person can go from North to South Fremantle for the same fare as it costs to go to town by train. In East Fremantle the number of people who travel by tram is five times more than the number who use the railways, and the population is approximately the same. There are two tramlines there, one on the south side and on the north side. On the south side where there is no railway 1,340,799 passengers, mostly from Bicton and Palmyra, were carried last year. I hope the Minister will impress the point upon his officers that it is better to extend tramways into areas where there is no railway communication instead of extending them into areas close to our railways.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan-Albany—in reply) [12.22]: The point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) will be noted. It is not fair to compare the Fremantle tramways with the Perth tramways. In the case of the Perth tramways we have had conditions which unquestionably ought to be adjusted, but which require the expenditure of a large sum of money. There is the difficulty in operating the system in the northern suburbs through the narrow neck over the Beaufort-street bridge. That makes the system an expensive one to work. The difficulty could be largely overcome if one of the lines in Beaufort-street could be run over the Horseshoe Bridge into Newcastle-street and onwards. The line running into Beaufort-street is an expensive one to operate. When we took over the trams the condition of the track and the rolling stock was such that we had to incur heavy expenditure in order to provide rolling stock for the tremendously increased traffic. I could have given members a few astounding facts concerning the trams since they were

taken over by the Government, facts which would show what improvement has been effected. I do not propose to labour the question of tramway extensions. In and around the city of Perth the suburbs are growing, not merely alongside the railway lines, but extending from them. These suburbs are suffering greatly from lack of communication. The northern side of the railway line at Leederville is almost a city, but the people there have no tramway facilities of any description. The Maylands section from the Guildford-road, where it crosses the Mt. Lawley station, down to the Peninsula is practically isolated. The same thing applies to Belmont where there is no railway.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is no great population at the Peninsula.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: On the southern side there is a big population, and the distance to the railway is too far to ask workmen to walk twice a day.

Mr. Hughes: They are maintaining a motor service at Belmont.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think there are two. We cannot successfully operate an isolated tramway system. We cannot have tramways running in Claremont and operated economically as a separate system, because the rolling stock would not be available for rush periods. If it were, it would be lying idle at other times. When the system is connected up, although a great many trams will not be run along the main line between the centre of Perth and the centre of Claremont, the trams can be run as feeders from the Claremont station into the centre of Claremont. The same thing could apply in the case of Leederville. We could also do the same at Maylands. That is the only means of serving the people and making the tramways payable.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That would have a bad effect upon the railways to Midland Junction.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think so. At present people who have to go to Guildford or Midland Junction by train are often in such crowded carriages that they have to stand all the way. It would, therefore, be better for the people as a whole if the tramways could be provided to overcome the crowding in the trains. I do not think it would injure the Treasury, nor would it detrimentally affect the people of Guildford and Midland Junction if tramway facilities were provided. They have had to put up with a great deal of inconvenience in going to and from their work.

Mr. Chesson: Seeing that the tramline has been laid down to Claremont, why has the route not been opened? Is it because there is no rolling stock available?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The rails have been laid only part of the way. When we started it was pointed out that the material we had in our possession was suitable only for side road traction. So much

as we had was put into the Claremont line. From the point where the line must come into the centre of the road, there is a big depression alongside the road, and the buildings are below the level of the street. If we ran the trams alongside the road they would be above the level of the fences. We must, therefore, adopt the centre road construction and must have centre road material. This is expected to arrive at any time and when it comes we shall get on with the job. It is not worth while operating the portion of the system that is now laid down.

Mr. Chesson: It is not due to shortage of rolling stock?

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. MARSHALL (Murchison) [12.28]: An obligation is cast upon the officials of the Tramway Department to see that those lines that are already in existence and are carrying a good deal of traffic are kept in a fit state of repair. The section between Newcastle and Walcott streets is in a bad condition.

The Minister for Mines: We are only waiting for the material.

Mr. MARSHALL: I have seen two trams off the line in that section. This is very inconvenient to the public. I will take the Minister's word as to the shortage of material. There is much injustice with regard to the issue of tickets by conductors and with regard to the responsibility placed on them in this connection. I acknowledge that the matter involves some considerable difficulty for the officials. Unfortunately, the tramway system has to cater for dishonest travellers as well as honest travellers, comparatively few though the former may be. Usually it is a well dressed person that aims at deceit. The conductors say that one needs to be carefully dressed for the purpose. During the busiest part of the day the conductor goes along the car collecting fares, and then perhaps he is called to the rear of the car before he is finished. Presently an inspector boards the car and finds a nice young girl, or a pleasant young man, in possession of a ticket all right, but an old ticket, one not issued on that trip. Then the inspector takes the conductor to task. Probably the conductor is reported, and a black mark is placed on his record. I understand that the tramway authorities are the only ones who hold the conductor responsible in this way. The person who travels on the railways without a ticket is held responsible for it. Should a conscientious servant of the tramway system be penalised because of a dishonest traveller? Nothing is done to the person who cheats, but the conductor sometimes loses his billet over it. I suggest to the Minister that he should consider the advisability of passing a by-law to make the guilty party at least share the responsibility with the conductor. Incidentally let me say that I do not

see why the conductor should bear any share of the responsibility.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Cases have been known where the conductor has given the wrong chit.

Mr. MARSHALL: No doubt, but in the majority of cases honesty would prevail and the party holding a wrong chit obtained in such circumstances would be able to prove his or her innocence. Undoubtedly something ought to be done to protect conscientious and efficient servants of the tramway system.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Electricity Supply, £99,000*—agreed to.

Vote—*State Batteries, £44,000*:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is no variation in the working of the system of State batteries, although the vote shows a net decrease of £28,000. In point of fact, there is no decrease. In the past we have charged against revenue account the purchase of tailings. The practice is a positive absurdity, because tailings may be purchased to-day and the gold not extracted for perhaps two years. The purchase of tailings should be charged to suspense account, and the Treasurer has agreed to that. As the gold from tailings is sold, the matter is adjusted.

*Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Cave House, £12,909*—agreed to.

Vote—*Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £63,000*:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I recently referred a certain matter in connection with the Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department to the Minister, who said he would look into it. He told me that I was wrong.

The Minister for Works: I was informed that you were wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have since then been trying to ascertain the exact position with regard to the public accounts. According to the Auditor General, a total sum of £1,740,942 13s. 8d. has been advanced to the Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department on account of General Loan up to the 30th June, 1923. From the balance sheet of the department I find that the balance in debentures at that date was £369,938 11s. 0d. In the Government Property Trust Account I find in this connection an amount of £149,071 10s. 6d., which makes a total capital of £2,259,952 15s. 2d. According to the balance sheet which has been presented, the total of liabilities and assets is £2,199,636 3s. 2d. This shows that the total I mentioned previously was £60,316 12s. over that stated in the balance sheet. In connection with the statement we have before us, I have taken the Auditor General's figures in respect of Loan Account and the department's figures in respect of debenture account and Government Property Trust Account for money expended on water supply, sewerage and drainage. 1

have given the total of the assets on this basis, and also the total as it works out according to the Auditor General's figures. In the Government Property Trust Account we find the sum of £256,881 6s. 10d. for which credit should have been given to the department in connection with the figures I have mentioned. Seeing that there is £60,000 over and above the total liabilities, I take it that we are paying interest and sinking fund on £196,564 14s. 10d. outside the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department. As the amount has been re-loaned, it appears that we are paying interest and sinking fund on it twice. To be exact, we are paying interest and sinking fund on £149,071 10s. 6d. and also on £196,564 14s. 10d. which includes the previous amount.

The Minister for Works: I am unaware of that and was told it was not so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am taking the figures as I have gathered them from the reports. I have been through Public Accounts and these figures show that every penny is not credited to the Water Supply Department.

The Minister for Works: I will be after it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is the position as I find it from Public Accounts supplied by the Auditor General. If that be so, it shows that the Metropolitan Water Supply is making a profit and not a loss. I can understand keeping up a capital account because it furnishes a good excuse for levying high rates.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the sort has been aimed at.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It looks like it.

The Minister for Works: I will look into the matter at once. It opens up a vista of research.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister should look into it.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the General Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year, which were reported to the House.

[The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.]

STATE TRADING CONCERNS.

As to continuing the Sitting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move—

That the House resolves itself into Committee to consider the Estimates for the State Trading Concerns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is this all about? Do you propose to go on?

The Premier: Yes, for a while.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I oppose the motion. In all fairness it can be said that we have done enough to-day.

The Premier: We have not got very far.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have finished the general Estimates and to launch upon a discussion of the State Trading Concerns at such a late hour will mean that we will sit for hours and talk without making any pro-

gress whatever. There are many important matters to be dealt with in connection with the State Trading Concerns. I would not mind if the Premier agreed to adjourn as soon as we come to a division, which will create much discussion. I will not have much to say in connection with the State brick-works, nor yet regarding State ferries, but there are other votes that will cause a lot of discussion.

The Premier: We will make a start at any rate.

Mr. Chesson: It is a fair proposition to adjourn.

The PREMIER: I have the greatest possible consideration for the position of hon. members, but we have not done very much yet. I hope to finish the session before long and to-night I do not propose to keep members very long. We can make a start and adjourn later on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope the Premier will not proceed with these Estimates to-night. The State hotels will take a considerable time.

Hon. P. Collier: Three or four days.

The Premier: If that be so, we had better continue straight on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I want to say something about the State Implement and Engineering Works.

The Minister for Works: And they come after the State hotels.

Question put and a division called for.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You would have had to close down lots of times but for the fact that we kept the House for the Government.

Mr. Mullany: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We sit in our places during the evening while the Government supporters go outside. I am not referring to Ministers, but to others. It is not a fair thing.

Mr. Lutey: Only six or seven have been here all night.

Mr. Piesse: We have been here.

Mr. Marshall: Who disturbed you from your slumbers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Members on the Government side, instead of being here attending to their duties, are outside.

Hon. P. Collier: Where are the rest of the Government party?

The Minister for Mines: Getting their nominations endorsed.

Hon. P. Collier: All this week we have been keeping the House for you.

Mr. Underwood: If it hurts you, don't do it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We do what we are paid for; I am damned if you do.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	19
Noes	11

Majority for	8
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AYES.

Mr. Broun	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Carter	Mr. Money
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Durack	Mr. Richardson
Mr. George	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Hickmett	Mr. Underwood
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Mana	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Cbesson	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Heron	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Hughes	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—STATE TRADING CONCERNS.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Division—State Brickworks, £20,716:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [12.53]: The net profit returned for the 12 months ended 30th June was £2,231 18s. 11d., bringing up the accrued profits to £2,764. In addition we have provided interest and depreciation, and £1,000 has been paid over to the Treasurer to go to Consolidated Revenue. During last year we set 7,000,000 bricks, and sold 7,548,340. The total depreciation provided since the inception of the brickworks has amounted to £9,624 18s. 3d., of which £5,000 is invested in cash in the Treasury. We have also provided a sinking fund of £448,000 11s. 8d. Trade is exceptionally brisk and we have orders that will require nine months to carry out. The relationship between the management and the employees is good.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How much did you pay into the Treasury last year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One thousand pounds.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [12.55]: I should like some further information.

Mr. Teesdale: We have a good profit, so there is not much to growl about.

Mr. LUTEY: But we should have far more. If the works had a clean go they would show much greater profit. Building has been retarded, and is retarded on account of shortage of bricks. Five years ago, when the war was on, the Minister declared that further machinery was required for the brickworks, that they had not sufficient machinery to cope with their orders.

The Minister for Works: No, I did not.

Mr. LUTEY: I say you did. It is in "Hansard." You cannot bluff me.

The Minister for Works. It is not in "Hansard."

Mr. LUTEY: You said it four or five years ago. It was putting the House under a misunderstanding.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. LUTEY: You said you did not have sufficient machinery, and were not in a position to get it.

The Minister for Works: I never said that.

Mr. LUTEY: But you did, and it will be found in "Hansard."

The Minister for Works: You are making a mistake.

Mr. LUTEY: It is you who were making a mistake when you gave that reply. Your excuse of five years ago was that you required more machinery.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the sort. It was kilns we required.

Mr. LUTEY: Five years ago you said it was machinery.

Hon. P. Collier: The House is becoming a bear garden. There is no control of the House whatever.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Minister for Works: You are quite wrong.

Mr. LUTEY: I am not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On a point of order. I am not going to sit here in the small hours of the morning listening to a wrangle like this. If you, Mr. Chairman, have lost control of the Minister, we are likely to be here indefinitely.

The Minister for Works: The hon. member is making a mistake.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well you may say so afterwards. Already you have had more to say than has the hon. member, although he is on his feet addressing the Chair. I am not going to sit here listening to a wrangle such as you are indulging in. Keep quiet and let the hon. member get on with his speech. I will not sit here listening to you.

The Minister for Works: Well stand.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I ask you, Mr. Chairman, to keep the Minister in order. If you cannot do so let us adjourn.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister must keep order.

Mr. LUTEY: It is a crying shame that building in the city should have been retarded for years past for want of bricks. We have the clay, the position, and everything necessary, if only we had the co-operation of the Government in an endeavour to supply sufficient bricks. The Minister says he has orders that will keep the works busy for the next nine months; yet it is known that for years past he has given the explanation that he had not sufficient machinery. Last year the works could have turned out ever so many more bricks if a Hoffman kiln had been installed. Why was that kiln not procured? It is a criminal shame that the Government should not have taken action. The excuse last year was that the kiln would take 12

months to build. So many excuses have I heard from the Minister that I hardly know whether that was last year or the year before. It was pointed out by the Minister last year that given a Hoffman kiln there was sufficient machinery to produce many more bricks. Nothing has been done, and yet there are complaints that people cannot get sufficient supplies of bricks for building purposes. I again protest against the inaction of the Government. The public should know the position and who is responsible for the retarding of building operations in the city during the last few years. The Government talk about State trading concerns. Here is a concern that gives no trouble whatever. A Hoffman kiln would enable the brickworks to make a handsome profit. I hope the Government will overcome any prejudice they have against extending this trading concern, because the building industry is languishing for bricks.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville) [1.2]: In answer to the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey) I wish to give my views as to the necessity for increasing the output of bricks. I agree heartily that building has been greatly retarded, not only in the metropolis, but in other parts of the State, because of the insufficient supply of bricks turned out by the State works. The reason may be that the works are not large enough, or that the Government have failed to extend them. I am glad the Government have failed to extend them. I am sorry the Government still continue to carry on these trading concerns. But for them, private people would enter the business.

Mr. Marshall: Why do not they enter it when there is a demand for bricks?

Mr. Money: Because the State has entered the business.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There should be State lawyers too.

Mr. Marshall: The member for Leederville should be ashamed to express that opinion when there is such a dearth of bricks.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not going to allow any discussion as to whether State trading concerns are beneficial to the State or otherwise. Members must confine themselves to the question of passing this vote for the management and control of the works. No question of policy can be introduced at this juncture.

Capt. CARTER: I am sorry you, Mr. Chairman, were not more firm with the previous speaker, who made a purely partisan speech.

The CHAIRMAN: I object to your remark, and call upon you to withdraw because it is a reflection on the Chair.

Capt. CARTER: What reflection have I cast on the Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: You said I had permitted Mr. Lutey to make a partisan speech.

Capt. CARTER: And refused me the right to reply.

The CHAIRMAN: I shall not allow members to discuss the rights and wrongs of State trading concerns under this vote.

Capt. CARTER: I did not intend to insult your position or you, but it seems unfair. However, I withdraw the words, but I feel I should have been allowed to reply to the hon. member.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [1.5]: The balance sheet of the State brickworks reveals an extraordinary position. We have invested in the concern £28,980, and the turnover for the year, according to the profit and loss account, was £8,000. We hear a lot about State trading concerns not paying. How can the brickworks be expected to pay?

The Minister for Works: They are paying. Mr. HUGHES: They would pay handsomely if they were properly handled.

The Minister for Works: They would pay better if I allowed the price to go up, but I will not do that.

Mr. HUGHES: Tell that to the marines!

Mr. Lutey: You want an extra kiln.

Mr. Marshall: Has anyone invited you to raise the price?

Mr. HUGHES: Though we have nearly £30,000 invested in this concern the gross sales for the year amounted to only £8,000. If the brickworks can be made to pay on such a small turnover in comparison with such a large investment, why does not the Minister extend them?

The Minister for Works: The sales last year were £24,000. What are you talking about?

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister is right. I should have said the profit was £8,000. When the demand for bricks is so great and the city is starving for bricks, the output could be considerably increased without adding to the overhead charges to any great extent. There are certain overhead charges attached to running any business, but very often it is possible to double the turnover without materially increasing the overhead charges. That is where profits are made. If the turnover of the brickworks is being kept down to a minimum and the city is starving for bricks, this concern is not being given a fair chance. A reasonable opportunity is not afforded to ascertain whether the works can pay. Out of gross sales amounting to £24,000 last year, the gross profit was £8,000, or 33 per cent.

Mr. Teesdale: That is not bad.

Mr. HUGHES: It is verging on profiteering.

The Minister for Works: They were losing money when I took them in hand.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, they were not.

The Minister for Works: They were.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We were selling bricks at 35s. a thousand less than you have been selling them.

Mr. HUGHES: I am continually being challenged as to whether the State brickworks are in the combine, and whether the price charged

by the State works is fixed by the other brick-makers.

The Minister for Works: We fix the price of our bricks without consultation with anyone else, and I am not going to raise the price.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister is quite right in refusing to raise the price. If the other people are not consulted and there is no arrangement with them, the Minister will be doing a good service to the State if he reduced the price of bricks.

The Minister for Works: Why reduce the price when we can sell at the present price all we can produce?

Mr. HUGHES: Why not, if it is possible to sell four or five times the quantity? Why is not an effort made to meet the demand by turning out more bricks? Thirty-three per cent. is a good profit, and the market is available.

Mr. Marshall: There is no opposition; the Government have an open market.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not know anything about the opposition. The Minister said the works were nine months in arrears with orders, and he proudly claimed that the works had begun to pay since they had come under his administration. When a man running a business is able to fix the price of his commodity at a figure that will return 33 per cent. profit, he cannot claim much credit for making the business pay. There is nothing sensational about that.

The Minister for Works: I am not asking for praise. I simply say they are paying. That is better than the £7,000 loss of a few years ago.

Mr. HUGHES: How was the loss made up?

The Minister for Works: I do not know, speaking from memory.

Mr. HUGHES: Was the loss repaid?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was not a loss. It was stock on hand and the Minister knows it.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong. Do not let us quarrel about it.

Hon. P. Collier: My Minister's word against yours?

Mr. HUGHES: If there was that loss in addition to the profits that have accumulated, does the Minister suggest the works made an additional £7,000 profit and wiped out the debit balance?

The Minister for Works: There was very little work being done for a long time, and we still had to pay interest and sinking fund.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: If there was a loss of £7,000—

The Minister for Works: Call me in when you have finished. I do not want to listen to a lot of Tommy rot.

Mr. Marshall: Go outside! You are just as good outside as you are inside.

Mr. HUGHES: I protest against the attitude of the Minister. He is responsible for these works and is paid a salary by the State to carry out these duties. He is a servant

of the State. We are kept here until the small hours, but when we call attention to these matters he walks out of the Chamber.

The Premier: I will tell you all about it.

Mr. HUGHES: We are entitled to have this information. The Minister has no right to shirk his responsibilities to the country. Responsible government has become a farce. If this sort of thing is to go on we might as well cease discussing the Estimates. If the Minister chooses to ignore this Chamber, I will move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

Mr. HUGHES: I am glad to have brought the Minister back to a sense of his responsibilities. In the balance sheet on the debit side there is a profit of £2,231. If there was a debit balance on the profit and loss account of £7,000 in addition, and there is no statement in the balance sheet to lead us to believe otherwise, I assume that the current profits have wiped out the deficit and the works are now showing a credit balance of £1,764. That proves how profitable these works are. The margin of profit is high, but I raise no objection to that. If the people are paying a high price for their bricks, whatever profit is made out of the works is going back to them in the shape of public services, etc. There is a big demand for bricks.

Mr. A. Thomson: Incidentally, the works are keeping others from starting.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not at all.

Mr. HUGHES: In what way has the establishment of the State Brickworks prevented others from starting?

Mr. A. Thomson: They have done so.

Mr. HUGHES: If the State Brickworks are keeping others out of the business, they must be looking for an enormous return upon their money, and cannot be satisfied with a 33 1/3rd per cent. profit.

Mr. Chesson: And orders for nine months ahead!

Mr. HUGHES: They must want a lot. It would be in the interests of the metropolitan area if the capacity of the works was increased. There must be a certain amount of administrative expenses and overhead charges, and if the output is doubled or trebled there will be very little increase in this direction. A more handsome profit could, therefore, be made if the operations of the works were extended. There is a profit of £8,000 for the year. The interest bill is £1,400, so that one-sixth of the profit is being taken for interest. That is a tremendous strain to place upon any business. Notwithstanding the heavy rate of interest, the brickworks are able to meet it, and provide £1,500 for depreciation and show a profit on the year of £2,231.

The Minister for Works: Is that not a good performance?

Mr. HUGHES: It is excellent. I cannot understand why such a payable concern, that

is supplying commodities to the public that is hungry for them, should have such a restricted output.

Mr. Teesdale: We will do better next year.

The Minister for Works: We can make any quantity of bricks, but we have not the means of burning them.

Mr. HUGHES: Cannot we get the means? Let us extend the works, which mean so much to the community and return so much profit to the Government. In the balance sheet against the liabilities is a sum of £1,774 due to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I take it, from that, the State Brickworks owe that sum to the revenue.

The Minister for Works: How do you make that out?

Mr. HUGHES: It is in the balance sheet, liabilities on capital account.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Mr. HUGHES: It says "Consolidated Revenue Fund, £1,774."

The Minister for Works: That is capital account.

Mr. HUGHES: It is a liability to Consolidated Revenue.

The Minister for Works: Yes, it is capital.

Mr. HUGHES: If the works owe that amount to Consolidated Revenue, and there is a surplus, why is the debt not paid off? Instead of that we find the works giving the Colonial Treasurer £1,000, which was transferred to Consolidated Revenue.

The Minister for Works: I think he collared it.

Mr. HUGHES: It is an extraordinary way of doing business.

The Minister for Works: One is current account and the other is capital account. To-day it shows a credit instead of a debit.

Mr. HUGHES: The £1,000 was not a loan to the Treasurer and he is not paying interest on it.

The Minister for Works: Of course not.

Mr. HUGHES: It is a straight out appropriation from profits. In all fairness to the brickworks, the £1,000 should have been set against the debt of £1,700 and next year, instead of being obliged to pay interest on £1,174, the works would be paying interest only on £774. It is unjust that the State Brickworks should hand £1,000 to the revenue and continue to pay interest on the whole of the capital account.

The Minister for Works: We cannot pay off our capital account. You do not understand.

Mr. HUGHES: Why? I know as much about accounts as the Minister does. If what this balance sheet discloses is the Minister's idea of proper business methods, I do not agree with him. The capital account and the interest bill of the concern are kept as high as ever, while the Treasurer is collaring the profits and putting them into his revenue. In the balance sheets of some other State trading concerns losses are capitalised and interest is charged on them, but profits are transferred to Consolidated Revenue.

The Minister for Works: Under the Act the Treasurer has the right to collar any profits that are made.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for East Perth may discuss the balance sheet of the brickworks till Doomsday, but he must not discuss State trading concerns in general.

The Minister for Works: What has been done is in accordance with the law, and the member for East Perth would do the same if he were Treasurer.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister has no right to prognosticate what I would do. The profits of the brickworks go into Consolidated Revenue, but if there is a loss on the works and the Treasurer has to make good that loss he charges interest on the amount of the loan in next year's balance sheet.

The Minister for Works: That is so, and that is the law.

Mr. HUGHES: It would be fairer to repay the Treasurer the £1,000, or else invest the amount in securities with a view to ultimately paying off the capital account, and thus effecting a considerable reduction in interest charges for the following year. Within a few years the result would be a business running free of interest. Even if the Government borrow money to increase the plant at the brickworks, it would be an excellent investment, one which could not go wrong; and a considerable service would be rendered to the public by the increase in the supply of bricks.

Hon. W. C. Angwin called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung, a quorum formed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [1.30]: I have expressed my resentment of the Minister's statement that when he took the brickworks over there was a loss on them. I have said that there was not a loss. In the balance sheet I now have before me the Minister showed a loss of £596. That balance sheet was presented after the Labour Government went out of office.

The Minister for Works: In 1916?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. What was the position? The Minister put in the report for 1916 a statement of the position, and this showed that £1,243 8s. was charged for interest, and £1,126 9s. 8d. for depreciation. There is not a penny allowed now for depreciation. Owing to the war, 646,520 bricks were stacked and they were valued at 27s. 10d. The Minister has never made a brick at that price since he has been in charge of the works. In addition there were 258,960 bricks at the kiln and they were valued at 25s. 4d. That is how he showed a loss. That is when he burned the midnight oil with a pressman in his company, fixing this up to depreciate the efforts of the Labour Party.

The Minister for Works: You have an imagination.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is a fact.

The Minister for Works: It is not a fact about me.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is how the balance sheets were fixed up to show a loss. A proper balance sheet would have shown a profit.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am right. Bricks have never been turned out at 27s. 10d., but they were stacked and charged for at that rate.

The Minister for Works: Why did not you raise this question then? How can you expect me to answer your statements now?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was raised at the time.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister will find these particulars in the 1916-17 Votes and Proceedings and they show the figures I have quoted.

The Minister for Works: What about depreciation?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: You have charged nothing now.

The Minister for Works: What are you talking about?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There is not a penny charged for depreciation for 1922-23.

The Minister for Works: Yes, there is. There is £1,500 allowed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That figure does not appear in the statement at all. The only items appearing are: Manager, £550, wages and general working expenses, including repairs and minor additions necessary to the undertaking, £18,587; interest on fixed and working capital £1,500; departmental charges £175, and sinking fund £71.

The Minister for Works: Depreciation is there anyhow.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No depreciation is shown in the Estimates at all. On the other hand, an item dealing with depreciation appears in the Estimates for the State Ferries, which is the next to be dealt with. A sum of £212 is allowed for depreciation there.

The Minister for Works: I have the balance sheet and it shows £1,500 is charged for depreciation.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am going on the Estimates. It shows the expenditure last year and the Estimates for this year. While depreciation is shown in connection with some of the State Trading Concerns, none is shown for the brickworks. I do not question the Minister's ability to deal with the trading concerns, but I like him to be fair.

The Minister for Works: I try to give fair play.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: You say there has been a loss, but it has been since we left office. The Minister said there was that loss when he took over, but that it is not so.

The Premier: He said several years ago.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We are not all damned fools on this side of the House, and some of us have memories.

Hon. P. Collier: There may be one or two, but most of us are not!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There has been no loss in connection with these works, but the building trade has been retarded throughout the metropolitan area owing to the scarcity of bricks. Recently a contractor at East Fremantle suggested that fibrolite should be used for housing as bricks could not be obtained. I do not think that cement preparation would be as good as wood, as a stone thrown from the outside would go through it. We have not got the bricks to keep tradesmen going. The erection of the Fremantle tram shed has been delayed for a long time because bricks cannot be obtained.

The Premier: Some little time ago there were too many bricks.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [1.40]: Regarding the statements of the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey), what I wish the Committee to understand is that I could not have said, and I did not say, that we wanted more machinery.

Mr. Marshall: You did, and I have a note of what you said here. I will show you what you said.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If I did say it—I am not aware that I did—I was wrong.

Mr. Lutey: You did say so.

Mr. Marshall: So he did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If I did refer to machinery, it was a mistake. The machinery we have is capable of turning out more bricks than we are doing.

Mr. Lutey: Why did you tell me I was wrong?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The machinery we have cannot turn out more bricks during eight hours than it is doing now. If we had an additional Hoffman kiln we could double our production. It is not the policy of the Government to further extend the works and in the circumstances we cannot do any more. The hon. member may not agree with me, but that is the position. As to the statement of the member for North-East Fremantle, I believe the balance sheet for the year is an honest one.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: So were the previous balance sheets.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I admit that. The balance sheet has been audited by the Auditor General and the price put upon the bricks is the valuation arrived at by the manager. They have not been written down by my instructions, nor by the instructions of anyone else that I am aware of.

Mr. Hughes: The Auditor General is not the person to put the value on the stocks.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But he would do it. He would value anything.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: During my time I have put my opinions aside and have done what I could to make the works a success.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Nobody raises any objection to that, but others did the same before you got there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The total depreciation has been £9,676. Hon. members must be gratified to think this concern is paying. We are in a very good position financially and the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) need not refer to the State Trading Concerns Act. He will find that all profits made are at the disposal of the Treasurer, while of course if we had a loss and had to get money from the Treasury to meet it, we should have to pay interest on it.

Mr. Marshall drew attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung; a quorum formed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No doubt the paucity of bricks referred to is very serious for the building trade. The State Brickworks is not in a position to deliver more bricks than it is doing. Great credit is due to the manager and to those who have helped him bring it to its present prosperous condition.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister for Works never shoulders any responsibility.

The Minister for Works: The Minister for Works shoulders every damned bit of responsibility.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to complain about the Minister, who shuffles every time the Estimates are brought before us.

The Minister for Works: The Minister is not on the Estimates.

Mr. MARSHALL: And it would be better for the State if he had never been on the floor of the House.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss the Minister.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am entitled to criticise the administration for not having extended the brickworks.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must speak to some item.

Mr. MARSHALL: Well, Item No. 1, Manager, £550, will do as well as another. The manager is general supervisor and, no doubt, reports to the Minister the necessity for extending the business.

The Minister for Works: He cannot build a kiln unless I give him the money for it.

Mr. MARSHALL: And the Minister can say, "I cannot build a kiln unless the Treasurer gives me the money." The manager is responsible more or less. I am sorry I have lost the opportunity to deal with the point I wish to touch upon. The Minister has told deliberate lies here this evening.

The Minister for Works: That must be withdrawn!

Mr. MARSHALL: I will withdraw it, but "Hansard" will prove that I am right.

The Minister for Works: I object to that.

Mr. MARSHALL: Well, I will pull out the lot.

Mr. Hughes: I should like your ruling, Mr. Chairman, as to whether hon. members are not treating the Chair with contempt in going out again as soon as a quorum has been formed.

The CHAIRMAN: The general rule is that if the Chairman believes a quorum to be within the precincts, it is all right.

The Minister for Works: If you, Sir, do not stop the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), I will go and break his bloody neck.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am going to ask the Minister to withdraw that word. If there is any more language like that I will leave the Chair, and declare the sitting closed. I will not sit here and be made a laughing stock.

The Minister for Works: I will withdraw and apologise, but I am not going to put up with that sort of stuff from Mr. Marshall. I call upon you to make him withdraw and apologise.

The CHAIRMAN: I did ask the hon. member to withdraw, and he withdrew.

The Minister for Works: And as soon as he sat down he repeated the offensive words.

Mr. MARSHALL: I will withdraw. What are the words?

The CHAIRMAN: I don't know.

Mr. MARSHALL: Nor does the Minister.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 1.50 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 13th November, 1923.

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

OBITUARY—MR. PETER O'LOUGHLEN, M.L.A.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [4.33]: It is with the deepest regret that I ask you, Mr. President, to permit me to move the following motion:—

That this House desires to place on record its sincere sympathy and condolence with the relatives of the late Mr. Peter O'Loughlen, member of the Legislative Assembly, and that the President be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the brother of the late member.