

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 3rd August, 1905.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3:30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS: Amended Regulations under the Mining Act, 1904.

By the MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Industrial Unions registered under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

QUESTION--BLIND INSTITUTE, MAYLANDS.

MR. KEYSER asked the Treasurer: 1, Is the Blind Institute at Maylands assisted financially by the Government? If so, when was financial assistance first granted, and what is the total amount paid to the institute by the Government from its establishment? 2, What amount, if any, is proposed to be donated next year? 3, Has the Government assisted in the erection of the building, and if so, to what extent?

THE TREASURER replied: 1, Yes, since 1895-6 to the extent of £5,650. 2, Will be shown on Estimates. 3, A special grant of £500 for farther buildings was made in 1904-5, but previous expenditure out of the yearly vote on buildings is not known.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. GORDON, farther leave of absence for one fortnight granted to the member for Greenough (Mr. Nanson), on the ground of illness.

PAPERS--MINING WARDEN GEARY.

MR. C. H. LAYMAN (Nelson) moved:—

That all papers and reports in connection with a departmental inquiry held recently at Greenbushes in connection with certain charges made against Warden Geary be placed on the table of the House.

He did not question the action of the department, or the fairness of the inquiry, or the ability of the gentlemen who conducted the inquiry. There was a mining case at Greenbushes in which a considerable amount of money and property was involved. One of the parties made certain charges against Warden Geary—

MR. SPEAKER: The motion had been placed among formal motions, so that it could be moved without debate. If it was intended to debate the motion it should not have been placed among the formal matters. The motion should be formally moved and adopted.

MR. LAYMAN formally moved the motion.

Question passed.

BILL--ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the MINISTER FOR LANDS AND EDUCATION, and read a first time.

BILL--ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL--PERTH MINT ACT AMENDMENT

Appropriation Message from the Governor received and read.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. H. Daglish): In moving the second reading of this Bill, it is not necessary for me to make much remark. The object of the Bill is clear on the face of it. Under the principal Act provision is made to pay £20,000 per annum towards the working cost of the Perth Mint. This Bill proposes to increase that amount by £2,500, in consequence of representations that have been made by the Mint authorities in regard to the necessity of increasing the subsidy. At present, on two or three occasions the annual expenses of the Mint have run dangerously close to the subsidy provided, and there is a large increase of business going on in that establishment, an increase which is expected to be larger during the present financial year, owing to an alteration that has been

made in the direction of liberalising the Mint regulations. This is likely to lead to gold that at the present time is sent outside the State being treated at the Mint. I will give members a few figures with regard to the growth of the transactions, and with regard likewise to the amount of the expenditure which has taken place from year to year. Beginning with 1897-98, the expenditure for salaries, labour, and other ordinary working expenses was £4,470; the following year it was increased to £9,811; in 1899-1900 the expenditure was £19,193; this fell the following year (1900-1901) to £16,710; in 1901-1902 it was £16,828; in 1902-1903, £19,732, or a little less than £300 under the amount of the subsidy available; in 1903-1904, £18,891; and in 1904-1905, £18,580. At the same time I should like to call the attention of members to the fact that the Perth Mint is a profit-earning establishment, and is now returning annually a substantial amount to the State. In 1899-1900—I am quoting now from figures which I have obtained from the Mint—the net loss was £11,750; in the following year it had fallen to £7,425; in 1901-1902 it was £904; and each year since then there has been a net gain. In 1902-1903 the gain was £9,589; in 1903-1904, £17,545; in 1904-1905, £15,663. The total gain to the State during the term the Mint has been in existence is £22,718. I do not intend to go through the figures year by year in relation to interest and sinking fund, working on a $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. basis as regards interest and 1 per cent. as regards sinking fund; but I will mention that for the last financial year the interest and sinking fund on that basis represented an amount of £2,588, showing a profit therefore of over £13,000 after deducting sinking fund and interest on the amount expended in building and equipping the Mint. In moving the second reading of this Bill I want it to be understood that it does not necessarily follow that because a subsidy of £22,500 is provided the subsidy will be expended. As the figures which I have given the House indicate, there has been no year yet in which the full amount of £20,000 at present authorised has been expended, the custom being that the Mint authorities

shall at the end of the financial year return to the State any difference between the subsidy and their expenditure. Therefore, should there be no need for new expenditure owing to an increase of business, the difference between the working expenses and the subsidy will be in the future returned, just as in the past. Therefore, in agreeing to this proposal, members are giving only an authorisation which will be used if required, but which will not be trenchanted upon if it be not necessary to take that action. I want to say here that as far as the administration and management of the Mint are concerned, there can be no question that they have been efficiently and economically carried out, and members can, therefore, with the greatest security agree to this increase. It is not necessary for me to go through the figures in regard to the amount of gold which at the present time is being treated. I have figures relating to the whole term during which the Mint has been in active work. I will simply state that there have been yielded altogether 1,131,375 ounces during the present calendar year, of which 735,708 fine ounces have been treated at the Perth Mint. And as I said a little earlier, it is hoped that by the liberalisation of the regulations which has taken place already there will be even a larger proportion of the gold output treated at the Mint in the future. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—WORKMEN'S WAGES ACT AMENDMENT.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND LABOUR (Hon. R. Hastie), in moving the second reading, said: Members who have read the Workmen's Wages Act and are acquainted with the existing legislation on this subject will know that in 1897 Parliament passed a Workmen's Lien Act, containing certain provisions that are common to the Act of New Zealand, to some Acts of Victoria, and to

some Acts of other Australian States. Our Act provided that where a contractor agreed to build a house and to receive progress payments, before he could get those payments he must either assure the owner that the workmen were being paid, or that the men must make a declaration to the effect that the contractor should receive such payments. That was the law in this State for about a twelvemonth. In the year 1898, however, there was passed, at the instance of the then Attorney General, a Workmen's Wages Act, which provided that in certain instances the foregoing precautions need not be taken, some inconvenience having arisen from the Workmen's Lien Act as it then stood. For some reason which I am unable to guess, and as to which a reference to *Hansard* does not in any way enlighten me, a part of the Workmen's Lien Act then in force was repealed. From that time till the present we have got on with a Workmen's Wages Act and a very partial Workmen's Lien Act; and much inconvenience has resulted. Representations have been made in many quarters, more especially by workers, that many workmen engaged in the building trade in this State have been unable to get their wages; not because the owners of the houses or those who ordered them to be built had not the money to pay wages, but because the contractors happened to be of a speculative turn of mind, or happened to be dishonest. However, it has always been urged that we ought to provide in this State legislation similar to that of New Zealand; and with that object this measure has been framed. I may say that instead of copying the elaborate legislation of New Zealand, the Government have thought it advisable to simply re-enact the provisions of the Workmen's Lien Act which were unanimously approved by Parliament in the year 1897, and to which, so far as I know, no serious exception has been taken. I move the second reading of this Bill.

On motion by MR. RASON, debate adjourned.

PAPERS—NORSEMAN RAILWAY PROJECT.

MR. H. GREGORY (Menzies) moved:

That there be laid upon the table of the House the report of the board appointed to

inquire into the proposed railway to Norseman.

From the Premier he understood that some little time must elapse before the report could be tabled, as some of the schedules were not yet complete. The construction of the railway was part of the Government policy, and as a board had been appointed to report on the project, it was only just that the full report should be available to members and the public.

Question passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 4 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 8th August, 1905.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—MIDLAND COMPANY'S LAND SOLD.

DR. ELLIS asked the Premier: 1, What amount of land has been sold by the Midland Railway Company since the passage of the Midland Railway Loan Act, 1893; (a.) totally, (b.) partially? And what sum has been received by the