

ing with this question. Their motive is one of mistaken kindness. Some members, I am aware, consider it would be cruel to turn helpless settlers off the board. I say, much better turn them off and let them make a fresh start than let them continue hopelessly in debt, dragging along on what has been called the dole system, which has proved so disastrous elsewhere, and which, if made permanent here, will sap the energy and life out of these people until they become useless as citizens. I regret having to support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 7.55 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 3rd October, 1923.*

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

### QUESTIONS (2)—MINING INDUSTRY.

#### *Excluded Workers.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: Is it his intention to bring under the scope of the Miners' Phthisis Act, when proclaimed, all workers excluded from the mining industry through having contracted tuberculosis whilst engaged in the industry prior to such proclamation?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: All workers excluded from the mining industry having tuberculosis must be brought under the scope of the Miners' Phthisis Act, whether the disease was contracted before or after the Act was proclaimed.

#### *Sanitation and Ventilation.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has he received any report from Doctors Sayers and Pritchford on the sanitation and ventilation of mines inspected by them in Western Australia? 2, If so, is it his intention to lay such report on the Table of the House? 3, If no report was submitted, what action does he intend to take to give publicity to the opinions formed by Doctors Sayers and Pritchford during their inspection of mines visit in this State?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No, except verbally. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, It is proposed to send an inspector to South Africa to investigate dust determination, ventilation, and sanitation as practised in the mines in South Africa, with the object of introducing such methods as will improve conditions in our own mines.

### QUESTION—PEEL ESTATE, RETURN.

Mr. A. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: Can he give any indication as to when the return relative to the Peel Estate, ordered by the House about three weeks ago, will be forthcoming?

The PREMIER replied: As soon as ready it will be laid on the Table. These returns take some time to prepare.

### BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Mr. McCallum and read a first time.

### BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF MAINTENANCE ORDERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

### BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,050,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

### MOTION—APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM.

*To inquire by Royal Commission.*

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [4.37]: I move—

*That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire generally into the apprenticeship question.*

I am confident that some tangible good will result from the proposed inquiry. Throughout Australia an endeavour is being made to

assist in solving this pressing question. Parents at their wits' end to know what to do with their boys. For 20 positions at the loco. workshops, Midland Junction, 200 applications were received from boys who had passed high standards at school. A member opposite remarked recently that 73 applications had been received for one vacant apprenticeship in the electrical trade. That is a fair indication of the position in this State. If the House agrees to the appointment of a Royal Commission, I am confident that as the result of the inquiry some valuable suggestions will be forthcoming and, in consequence, the position greatly improved. During September I asked for a return showing the number of apprentices employed in the Midland workshops. At that time the Leader of the Opposition said the workshops were not carrying their full quota of apprentices. I was rather surprised at the remark, but the return disclosed that even in our own workshops the apprentices are 115 short of the number allowed by the Arbitration Court. For some years in this State the ratio of apprentices in the iron trade was one to every four journeymen. At present the ratio allowed is one apprentice to every two journeymen. It is a popular fallacy that unions are responsible for the lack of avenues open for the employment of apprentices.

Mr. Corboy: Of course it is a fallacy.

Mr. DAVIES: That return in respect of the Midland Junction workshops shows clearly that, notwithstanding that the ratio of apprentices to journeymen has been increased, employers generally are not prepared to take advantage of that increase. Similarly, in union circles it is held that employers desire to have the ratio of apprentices increased so that there might be sufficient boy labour. That fallacy is dissipated by the return alluded to, for it shows that while it is permissible to employ 297 apprentices at the Midland Junction workshops, only 182 are so employed.

Mr. Hughes: How does that prove that private employers do not want to increase the number of apprentices?

Mr. DAVIES: I am assured that the position is almost the same in private employment. At the State Implement Works also the number of apprentices employed is below the quota.

Mr. Marshall: What is the reason for it?

Mr. DAVIES: In the building trades very few apprentices are to be found. Various reasons have been given for this, the chief being that work in the building trades is intermittent, and so the employers cannot carry a full number of apprentices because frequently the number of journeymen is reduced, leaving the employers with more apprentices than are allowed by law. This position is not confined to Western Australia. As the result of inquiries made in the Eastern States I have received the following information:—

Sydney: Bill forecasted. Shall forward when available. Posting report Board of Trade and Gazette notices.

Melbourne: Government in House on 19th inst. announced they hope to submit Apprenticeship Bill this session. If such Bill is issued copy will be forwarded.

Queensland: Amendment Industrial Arbitration Act, 1916, passed present session gives power to prescribe by regulation method indenture, matter to be taught, maximum, minimum number apprentices, constituting boards make recommendation to Minister. Forwarding copy amending Act. There is an important suggestion contained in that. They must employ a minimum number of apprentices. Mr. Somerville, the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court in this State, in an address the other day showed what has been done regarding apprentices. I am willing to admit that our Arbitration Act has done probably more than any other Act of the kind in Australia to improve the position in regard to the employment of apprentices. It does not, however, give power to prescribe the minimum number of apprentices that may be employed. It is all very well for it to be said at the Midland Junction workshops that one apprentice may be employed to every two journeymen. This is the largest engineering shop in Western Australia, and seeing that it is very far short of its quota, the House would probably agree that there ought to be legislation to compel the employers to engage the number of apprentices permitted by the Arbitration Court. The argument against that would be that it is a serious interference with the liberty of the subject. It is right that all sections of the community should be heard, and that is one of my reasons for asking for the appointment of a Royal Commission. All sections could place their case before it; it could bring down suggestions to the House for consideration, and we could possibly adopt the recommendations. During a debate in the House mention was made of the reasonableness of reducing the period of apprenticeship. I have since made inquiries and find that the consensus of opinion is against the period of apprenticeship being reduced.

Mr. A. Thomson: It depends on the particular trade.

Mr. DAVIES: Yes. The chief reason given is that if the age is increased from 15 to 17 and there is a period of five years to be served, it brings a lad out at the age of 22. Prior to taking up apprenticeship he may have been employed from the age of 14 in some other avocation. The employer considers that if a lad is brought from some other calling, at which he has worked for two or three years, he may not be so amenable to discipline or be likely to take up the trade as well as if he had been brought straight from school. There is room for argument there. In the Old Country apprentices in some trades serve as much as seven years. I understand that if they are taken on at 14 they serve until they reach the age of 21. When a lad is taken on at the age of 17 he serves for five

years, which brings him out at 22. A marked difference is made between the two classes of apprentice. I do not know why the ages of 21 or 22 have been chosen.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Is that the law there?

Mr. DAVIES: I am not aware that there is any law in England governing the matter. I understand that of late years this principle has been adopted, particularly in engineering shops. I should have thought, with the years of experience I have had of engineering shops, that a young man would be much more capable of taking on a trade at the age of 17 or 19, and then serving from three to five years. The employers I have spoken to, however, are against that. It is a matter for inquiry by Royal Commission so that all shades of opinion could put their cases before it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government will not take them over 16.

Mr. DAVIES: I thought it was 17.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: To-day's paper says it is from 15 to 16.

Mr. DAVIES: A period of two years is allowed. A boy may apply at 15, and go on applying until he is 17, because he may fail in the first lot. I do not know what to suggest to improve the position, which is a serious one. The sooner we have an inquiry into the matter and a way out of the difficulty suggested, the better will it be for all concerned. With regard to building trades, it has been suggested that legislation should be passed allowing employers to transfer apprentices from one employer to another. If the work fails in one direction it is desired to transfer the apprentice elsewhere, so that the other employer may carry him on until he has completed his course. If that is necessary I am sure Parliament will not hesitate to pass legislation for such a reform. In Western Australia we are largely a working-class community. The boys who are suffering to-day from lack of opportunity to serve their time are boys of the working classes. While there may be some fault on the part of the workers in one direction and the employers in another, we have arrived at the stage when a serious attempt ought to be made, regardless of the fact as to whether we look at the matter from one side or the other, to find a solution of the problem. I appeal to members to pass this motion. The personnel of the Commission would be entirely in the hands of the Government. If the motion is carried I hope they will appoint someone capable of going into the matter, and making suggestions for Parliament to deal with next session. The subject could be debated at length, but so sure am I of the support of the House that I do not intend to dwell upon it at length. I have no intention of indicating that the Arbitration Court is not doing its business, and has not done it well with regard to apprentices. It is, however, hampered. Whilst its awards lay down the number of apprentices that may be em-

ployed, there is no assurance that the employer will take on the number allowed. I am glad of the opportunity of placing these facts before the House, and to show that the blame does not lie with trade unions for the scarcity of opportunities in this State for our lads.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

## MOTION—FORESTRY ROYAL COMMISSION.

### To adopt recommendations.

Debate resumed from the 12th September on motion by Mr. Pickering:—

*That in the opinion of this House effect should be given by the Government to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Forestry.*

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [4.58]: The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering), who has taken a very keen interest during recent years in forestry, has submitted to the House a proposal that the recommendations of the Forestry Commission should be carried into effect. I propose briefly to outline to what extent it is possible effect can be given to some of the recommendations, to what extent we feel it is not desirable at the moment to give complete effect to some of the proposals, and to give reasons for not doing so in others. I wish to pay a tribute to the hon. member, inasmuch as not only did he display interest in forestry, but gave much of his time to it and pursued the matter in an earnest way. This does him and the other members of the Commission much credit. We all regret exceedingly that the serious illness of one member of the Commission, the member for Forrest, will prevent him from discussing some of the phases of the report, and perhaps some of the matters I may introduce. After all, inquiry by Royal Commission into such a matter as this, unless such a Commission consists entirely of experts, is liable to be based first of all on opinion rather than on actual practice as it is adopted in places where forestry has progressed probably more than it has done in Western Australia. I do not say that for the purpose of detracting from the many valuable suggestions and recommendations of the Commission. It is true that until comparatively recently no one has given much attention to the maintenance of the tremendous wealth we have in our forests.

Mr. A. Thomson: It is time we did.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: True. The Commission, appointed on the recommendation of the member for Sussex, has done perhaps as much as anything else to draw public attention to the matter and help us to gain a proper appreciation of the value of the industry, and to draw attention to certain courses of action which ought to be adopted by the State

to preserve our forests. When a community is small in population, and when any of its natural products are of an extensive nature, the only regard that such a small population is likely to have for the commodities that are so easily obtained, and exist in such quantities, is that it may get them as cheaply as possible, irrespective of the amount of destruction which may follow in the train of that desire. Many of our forests have suffered materially from the obsolete and destructive method employed by sawmillers and others for the purpose of obtaining as cheaply as possible the wealth those forests contained, and turning the product to account. In our very early history we, as a colony, gave to certain corporations, very large territory of our best forests to exploit with very little restrictions indeed, and for a small return to the community, except in so far as it provided employment and the circulation of money. We have now reached the stage when we have made a survey of our position, and I am afraid that, notwithstanding the fact that it is desirable we should introduce restrictive methods, those who have in the past been able to practice the system of taking wealth from our forests will naturally protest, even vigorously, against any restrictive interference with the operations of the people or the companies they represent. For the purpose of explaining what I mean, I can give an illustration of the position that has arisen in some of our mining territory. In the Collie district, represented by Mr. Wilson, a good deal of heart burning occurred when we took over the control of the forests there, not for the purpose of doing anything to the detriment of the industry, but from the very opposite point of view. Our Collie mines are likely to remain with us, and to be of very great value for many years to come, and it is essentially therefore, if they are to be worked economically, that the forests within the range of mining operations at Collie should be maintained on a permanent basis. Consequently it was considered important that we should introduce certain methods to provide for that. In the past men have been able to take the axe and slaughter where and whither they chose, and it was only to be expected that strenuous objections would be raised when it was proposed to exercise control over that kind of thing. The timber was there on the mining leases and the holders of those leases thought that they could do what they liked with it. Anyone who considers the matter carefully will agree that the wholesale destruction of timber on the leases should not be permitted. All must agree that there should be restrictions to conserve the interests, not of the forests alone, but of mining as well. A similar condition prevailed at Greenbushes, and I assure the House that many letters of protest were received from people interested in mining there against the proposal of the Government to conserve the forests. At the same time the Government desired to provide for all requirements to permit of mining operations being carried on.

The position on the goldfields is slightly different. There the timber is required in great quantities for the purpose of carrying on the industry. Timber is just as essential for gold mining in Kalgoorlie as coal is essential to the operations of the railway system. But the timber in the forests on the goldfields must be viewed largely from the standpoint of an aid to mining, rather than mining should be regarded as an aid to forestry. While it may be suggested that we should introduce methods similar to those adopted in other parts of the State, in connection with the preservation of the forests on the goldfields, it must be admitted that the conditions are not quite parallel. Apart from the use that can be made of the goldfields forests for mining purposes, those forests are of no value. For instance, we cannot export the timber that grows there.

Mr. Mullany: What about sandalwood?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: For the moment I am not dealing with sandalwood. In these circumstances the question we have to decide is whether the interests of the mining industry demand that it shall receive first consideration, keeping in mind always that gold mining to some extent, unlike coal mining, has not a long period of life. The mines of Kalgoorlie—though we wish it were otherwise—must reach a point when they will not be producing the same quantity of gold that they are turning out to-day. That time, I am delighted to say, is a long way off, so far as we can judge, but, on the other hand, the question one has to consider is whether we should introduce restrictive methods regarding the taking of firewood, that would handicap mining operations. Without mining operations there would be no timber getting on the goldfields. The position there, as I have said, is entirely different from the forestry point of view, but we must take such measures as are necessary for the purpose of preserving permanently the hardwoods in our forests which at the moment are of great commercial value, and may become of even greater commercial value in the future. I desire hon. members to follow me on the subject of the conditions on the goldfields. We have firewood companies operating there and they practically, though not completely, cut out both firewood and mining timber on a face. And once having cut out any portion—they generally take a mile strip on either side of the line—they do not go back again. I wish to tell the member for Sussex, who was Chairman of the Royal Commission, that from an inspection made recently it is very evident that regrowth is taking place on the goldfields without any care whatever, and without the imposition of conditions. This regrowth is astounding, and about all that could be done to improve the position would be to go through those forests occasionally and ringbark and destroy some of the timber that will not be of value in the future, and in that way strengthen the other young growth. In districts where the timber was cut out the regrowth is making such progress that in 15 or 20 years' time it should be

possible to again cut a quantity of firewood and mining timber.

Mr. Stubbs: So soon as that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. The timber is making wonderful growth. Fifteen or 20 years in the life of gold mining makes a bit of a hole in the ground, but even without any regrowth, and on the Commission's own showing, there is within a range of Kalgoorlie at least 20 years' supply of firewood and mining timber available by moving from point to point. Therefore I do not think it is necessary to do very much in regard to operations on the goldfields forest, because the conditions are entirely different from those in the hardwood forest. But one of the essentials is that having made a classification of so much of our forests as are suitable for growing hardwoods on a commercial basis, areas should definitely and permanently be dedicated as State forests. No one will deny that, so that to-day what we are actually doing is that we are making a classification of our timber lands. There is before the Government at the moment, a recommendation from the Forests Department that 2,320,000 acres of prime jarrah forest should be permanently dedicated as a State forest. The Premier has assured me that once it is definitely shown that the land so proposed to be dedicated contains prime jarrah, he will not have the slightest hesitation in agreeing that that area shall be dedicated, because outside a few miles here and there, our jarrah lands are not suitable for cultivation. We know that prime jarrah country, that which carries a big loadage is not suitable for cultivation except perhaps in some valleys, and it is not altogether against the interests of the preservation of the timber to cultivate these valleys, for after all, a certain number of men must be continually employed in our forests, if we are to give the forests the attention it is desirable they should have. We must house the people under favourable conditions and one is that in a certain period of the year, when little or no work is taking place in the forests, those people may engage in cultivating the land which is not suitable for growing timber. We hope eventually that there will be a number of families that will become semi-forest workers doing afforestation work, cleaning up, and ringbarking the trees that are of value so as to give the younger trees that are coming on a chance to thrive, and generally working under the control of the Forests Department. These people will be able to produce commodities, and that will be much better for them than to live in idleness. I have explained the position with regard to prime jarrah forests. Karri is not quite all that we expected. Most people imagine that we had a huge territory of karri forest and that we would dedicate extensive areas for the purpose of producing and reproducing that timber. So far as our classification has proceeded we have learnt that we have only 75,000 acres which can be

dedicated permanently as a State forest for the regrowth of karri. I want members to note these figures. Karri after all is a valuable timber. For some purposes it is superior even to jarrah, and while in other respects it is not so valuable, still, from the point of view of construction work above ground, it is better than jarrah. As I have said, we have only 75,000 acres available, so far as it has been possible to make the classification to date. Then we have a timber which is not known in any other part of the world called tingle-tingle, red and yellow. I am doubtful whether there is very much of the yellow. Even of the red the quantity is limited.

Mr. Stubbs: Is it at Nornalup?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A fair percentage of the red tingle at the Nornalup Inlet is of no commercial value. The timber which is near brooks or rivers, if not much affected with gum and other conditions, has some value. That which is good, however, makes an exceptionally fine timber. I have seen some red tingle that has been polished in the same manner as some of the best timbers grown in Queensland, and to the layman it has not been possible to distinguish one from the other.

Mr. Stubbs: Where is that found?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Around Nornalup, but so far as we can ascertain from investigations made, there are only 6,700 acres that can be permanently dedicated as a forest. I believe, with regard to the growth of the timber, we can materially improve on nature. I suppose there are no forests where it can be said that timber of one class grows exclusively. In the jarrah forests we have red gum and banksia and other stunted growths, and with the conditions which have prevailed in recent years these have prevented the proper regrowth of the valuable timber. One of the things we have had to undertake is the making of provision for the future, and to destroy by ringbarking those timbers that are of no value. When we go into the jarrah forests, the matured timber is taken out, but the redgums are left. With the growth of the young redgums, which is much more pronounced than that of the jarrah, the younger jarrah trees are not given a chance.

Mr. Stubbs: You are killing all the redgums off?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, not all.

Mr. Stubbs: But redgum is not of much value.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes; there is a value attached to the redgum because of the tannin contents. We have extensive forests of redgum in various parts, and if we could only find a suitable method of tapping the redgum economically, we could extract the gum continuously. Under that system the trees would not be killed but the gum would be extracted for tanning purposes. That would give the trees a tremendous value as a tannin agent.

Mr. J. H. Smith: How many thousand acres are available?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is quite a large area to be obtained. Recently we had an inquiry from America from the Tannin Corporation. They applied for the exclusive right to extract gum from our trees. They offered to make up the tannin product in Western Australia, so that it would be exported from here. The tannin will prove valuable to this State as the difficulty regarding discolouration has been overcome. The fact remains, however, in the forest areas that we intend to dedicate permanently for the regrowth and production of jarrah and high-class timbers, we must give the young jarrah an opportunity to grow properly. If we permit the redgum and other trees of comparatively little commercial value to remain there, the young jarrah will be squeezed out. It is because of this that we have to go through our forests to clean them up and give the young jarrah trees an opportunity to develop properly. As I have already indicated, the area where tingle-tingle can be obtained is limited. Our investigations show that only about 6,700 acres are available. The timber is valuable, however, and should be retained. Another valuable timber we have is tuart, but the area where that timber is to be found is not extensive. We have completed the classification work and it is estimated that we have some 6,000 acres of tuart country available. We have already dedicated that area as a State forest, so that we can retain this valuable timber. To date the dedication work has not been extensive. We have 45,000 acres of jarrah dedicated at present, but we have no country dedicated as a State forest for the regrowth of karri. The balance of the area I have mentioned as necessary, is ready for dedication by the Government as soon as the Premier is satisfied that the classification has been completed.

Mr. Teesdale: What is the effect of the dedication of a forest?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we dedicate an area as a State forest, the effect is the same as with a Class "A" reserve. The area cannot be used for any other purpose than for the production of timber.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But you can allow grazing rights, for instance.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. The moment an area is dedicated it comes under the control of the Forests Department. Whatever is done in that area subsequently, can only be done with the consent of that department. The forest is the essential and the other considerations are subsidiary in those circumstances. Speaking of the Commonwealth generally, it may interest members to know that we took stock of the Australian timber resources some time ago, and we found that, so far as we were able to gather, the total area required to be permanently dedicated for the production of timber throughout the Commonwealth was 24½ million acres. That sounds a very large area, and if it were in one State, it would be a fine block to be

reserved for the production of timber for commercial purposes. When we take into account the quantity likely to be required by Australia within the next 20 years, and estimate on the ratio of the present consumption the supplies likely to be required by the larger population we hope will be here in that time, we find that we may reach the stage at which we will be unable to fulfil our own requirements much earlier than many people anticipate. We must make provision for our own requirements and when that time arrives it may be found that the area of territory actually set aside for the purpose of providing timber supplies for the Commonwealth, will be inadequate. I had some figures prepared for me to show the quantity of timber we require per head of the population and the production of our known timber resources, with a view to ascertaining what would be necessary if our population reached between 15 and 20 million people. There is no doubt that the population of Australia will reach that figure in due course. The result showed that very careful attention is necessary to this important question. To-day we are importing soft wood timber to meet local requirements and the day may come when we will have to import much more extensively. The other point I intend to refer to relates to the forest products laboratory. I agree with the Forests Commission that effective use could be made of such laboratory. Unfortunately, while we in Western Australia were in earnest and, I believe, the Federal Government, too, were in earnest for the time being, our hopes have not been realised. We found a certain sum of money jointly with the Commonwealth, and we arranged for Mr. Boas to travel practically throughout the world investigating certain matters in connection with forest products laboratory work. He came back armed with information and made his recommendations. He got so tired, however, of waiting for the final decision of the Federal Government that he accepted an appointment outside Government circles. He was thus lost to us.

Mr. A. Thomson: And the money spent was wasted.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not altogether, but largely so. We established a laboratory on a small scale. I regret having to speak in this strain, but I think it can be accepted as a fact that from the time the laboratory was established in Western Australia and came largely under the control of Federal departments, there was a strenuous, and ultimately successful, attempt to kill it, so far as Western Australia is concerned.

Mr. A. Thomson: Would it not be dreamful to give the West a chance!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I wish to explain the position briefly. When it was decided to establish a forest products laboratory in Western Australia, certain decisions were arrived at by expert foresters representing all the States of Australia. No pressure was brought to bear to influence their decisions. The whole problem was from the

point of view of Australian interests in general. The foresters met in conference in Hobart. After long discussions, they came to various conclusions. They decided that a certain course of action was necessary in order to conserve the timber supplies of Australia. They favoured the dedication of permanent State forests and a line of action was decided upon under that heading. They considered it was necessary to have trained foresters in Australia and for that purpose they advocated the establishment of a school of forestry. They realised that it was necessary to investigate the products of our forests. As hon. members know, a large quantity of the timber taken out of the forests is destroyed and put over the fire chute. That wasted timber contained valuable products, if only they could be extracted. As the big timber constituted the more profitable avenue of trade, however, no one took any notice of what might be termed the side lines. The trained forestry experts, however, decided it was necessary to educate people along these lines. They recommended the establishment of a forest products laboratory to be worked by the Commonwealth and the States conjointly. After mature consideration, Western Australia was selected as the State in which the laboratory should be established and they selected New South Wales as the place where the forestry school should be put on a proper footing. At no time did we object to the latter decision or to any decisions arrived at by the foresters, because we knew they had taken into consideration the interests of Australia as a whole and not of one State. We proceeded along the lines I have indicated and continued doing so until Sir George Knibbs was taken from one Federal department and placed in charge of another. Although the statement has been denied on several occasions, I am earnest in my opinion that Sir George Knibbs attended one of the forestry conferences, not with the idea of showing his intimate knowledge of forestry matters or a keen desire to gain knowledge, but with the object, I believe, of reversing the decision arrived at by the foresters, when they advocated the establishment of a laboratory in Western Australia. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) attended the conference in Queensland and I think he will remember that Sir George Knibbs was present and introduced the subject. He was unable to secure that, notwithstanding his advocacy, because the establishment of the forest products laboratory in Western Australia was considered in the interests of Australia as a whole. Sir George Knibbs has taken every course of action available in order to kill the proposal and at last he has succeeded.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Perhaps he was carrying out the policy of his Government.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The most extraordinary thing to me is how the Federal Government could possibly have accepted the recommendation made by Sir George Knibbs and reversed the policy laid

down by them and by the expert forestry officers of Australia, as arrived at in Hobart. I cannot understand how the Federal Government would permit an officer to set aside their policy without a protest or, in any case, to prevent that policy being given effect to. When Mr. Hughes was Prime Minister, we waited upon him in Perth as a deputation. He told us that he was quite satisfied that we had made out a case for the establishment of the laboratory here. He told us he could not understand what possible desire anyone attached to a Federal department—these were not his exact words, but this was the effect of what he said—could have in concerning himself about killing a project like the one under consideration. When he returned to Melbourne he would, he said, go into the question. He gave us the impression that it was all right, and that someone would get a nasty knock when he went into the matter. As soon as Mr. Hughes went, we were content to go into our tents, as Senator Pearce suggests, and perhaps to sulk. We thought we were rejoicing, for we regarded the position as assured. Then came the change of government. The present Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce, was asked to receive a deputation to discuss this matter when he came to Perth. Mr. Bruce had expressed a desire to hear anything we had to say about matters affecting this State, and our welfare. Mr. Bruce informed us that he had brought the papers with him, because he knew the matter would come up for discussion. Unfortunately, he said, he had been kept so busy here that he had not had time to look through the file. He told us, however, that we had apparently made out a good case, and that the question of the forest products laboratory had gone beyond the discussion stage. The establishment of that institution, he said, had been definitely accepted as the policy essential to the future of our forests. He said the only point that ought to concern us was whether we could make out a case for its retention in Western Australia. Without committing himself he said that not without very careful consideration and review would he permit any change in the policy that we had accepted as being definitely fixed. Consequently everybody went home feeling satisfied that the forests products laboratory had been saved to Western Australia. But at the very time the Prime Minister was speaking to us in that strain, his colleague, Mr. Atkinson, signed for the Prime Minister a letter stating that the Government had definitely decided to remove operations from Western Australia. Evidently this was done at the dictates of Sir George Knibbs. The Prime Minister had not the slightest knowledge of the letter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: To sign a thing like that does not make much difference.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It does make a difference.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: A signature is nothing nowadays.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** The hon. member, I fear, is seeking to introduce another subject that I do not wish to discuss at present. Behind the notions of the Federal authorities is the hand of Sir George Knibbs.

Hon. P. Collier: The unseen hand.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** No, it was seen clearly on this occasion. The newspaper proprietors of Western Australia, alive to the future need of paper and believing it would be possible to manufacture from our waste timbers a wood-pulp suitable for paper making, purchased a small machine at a cost of £600. The machine was exhibited in Perth, and it demonstrated that paper suitable for many purposes could be made from Australian wood-pulp. That evidently was too much for Sir George Knibbs. He had the machine put away in a shed somewhere, where it lies idle and deteriorating. If to-morrow it were required for use, it would cost perhaps £100 or £200 to put it in order.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How did Knibbs get hold of it?

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** It was placed under the control of his department, and evidently he exercises full control in his department.

Hon. P. Collier: What office does he hold?

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** He is director of the Bureau of Science and Industry. Again, to show the attitude of Sir George Knibbs: the Federal Commission had brought under their notice the desirableness of using the machine to give working displays at the Empire Exhibition. We thought it would be a good thing to demonstrate there that paper could be manufactured from Australian wood-pulp. We asked that the machine be made available. The Federal Commission consists of the Prime Minister as chairman, the Minister for Customs, Senator Wilson, the Premiers of each of the States or their deputies, and certain commercial men. I mention this to show that the Federal Government have representation on the Commission, and they are actually finding a fair percentage of the funds to make a display at the exhibition. The machine was given to the forest products laboratory; it was taken over by the department controlled by Sir George Knibbs, and a request to the Federal Government that the machine be made available has been met with a curt reply that it is not available. We want to know why. Evidently Sir George Knibbs woke up to the fact that he might want to use it. I do not know whether he does, but it cannot be so urgently needed by him that it cannot be spared for 12 months for use at the Empire Exhibition.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He may want to establish it in Melbourne.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** Perhaps so, but there is the paper mill in Geelong. We have been told that the Geelong mill can do all that could be done in the Perth laboratory. If they can do in the Geelong mill all that could be done here, why in the name of fortune should Knibbs decline to allow

the machine—donated by the newspaper proprietors of this State for a definite purpose—to be displayed at the Empire Exhibition if it is not out of a spirit of hostility to this State? I have accepted as practically final that a forests products laboratory, under Federal control, is going to be of little or no value to Western Australia. But much remains to be done. We ought to be utilising the waste from our forests; it is capable of being converted into valuable products, but the cost would be too heavy for this State alone to undertake the establishment and maintenance of a complete laboratory. Perhaps out of the revenue derived from the forests, we may be able to keep one or two trained men to make special investigations until such time as the Federal authorities change their attitude. I believe it is possible to make tannin extract from some of the waste. A preliminary survey has been made, and I think operations can be continued pending the establishment of a laboratory. We can demonstrate definitely that very valuable tanning properties are contained in some of our woods that are now put into the fire. We have had an inquiry from America as to the possibility of using marri-kino, which can be extracted from red gums without destroying the trees. It would be worth while to encourage the establishment of factories for the manufacture of this tanning agent. We have had an inquiry from one man, and we are prepared to give him an area—not a monopoly—in respect of which he may have an exclusive right, subject to his establishing a factory with a minimum capital, to make available this extract for the markets of the world. The aid of various branches of science may be utilised by appointing an advisory board consisting of representatives of science in the University as well as in some of our departments.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The senator's speech yesterday does not seem to have impressed you with the Federal view.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** I am not pinning my faith to Western Australia receiving much assistance from the Federal authorities. We shall have to do most of the work ourselves; perhaps it will be possible to work in conjunction with the other States. I do not feel disposed to join with the Commonwealth in the establishment of a forestry school since they have shown that they decline to assist us with the forest products laboratory. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) and the Royal Commission referred to the utilisation of prison labour. We can utilise prison labour in many directions to much better purpose than within high walls, but it must be distinctly understood that the question of utilising such labour in our forests is more one of prison reform than of forestry operations. This must be appreciated before we embark on any definite policy to utilise prison labour in our forests.

**The Colonial Secretary:** It is utilised in New Zealand and in certain parts of New South Wales.



The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but from a forestry point of view, free labour is infinitely better than prison labour, particularly in this State where the occupation in the forests is seasonal. It would not be as easy to deal with prison labour in a natural hardwood forest as it would be in a softwood or other established forest. The question is whether the cost of prison labour—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And supervision.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, would not be prohibitive as to make it not worth while.

Mr. A. Thomson: Is not the supervision of the prisoners already being paid for?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not to the extent that supervision would be necessary in our forests, where there would be no walls or other means of restraint. Supervision is necessary in the Fremantle Prison with its high walls, but much more supervision would be required in the open forest.

Mr. A. Thomson: You might select certain prisoners.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

The Colonial Secretary: Wonderful results have followed this reform in New Zealand.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If it is possible to utilise prison labour, the Forests Department should be called upon to bear only the proportion of expense that free labour would entail. The rest should be charged to prison reform. The position here differs from that in other parts of the world. As the occupation would be essentially seasonal, I am afraid the cost would be so great that it would be preferable to employ free labour.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would be cheaper.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think so, and that also is the view of the Conservator of Forests.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I mean under the present administration.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not deny that the proposal is worth considering from the point of view of prison reform, but the two questions should not be mixed. If it is decided that we can utilise prisoners in our forests with benefit to the prisoners, it would not be fair to charge the cost entirely against the Forests Department.

The Colonial Secretary: Only good conduct prisoners would be used, and experience in New South Wales has proved that very little supervision is required.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: New South Wales has not adopted prison labour to any great extent. I wish it to be understood that my attitude is not one of hostility, but I maintain that the question should be viewed primarily as one of prison reform. There should be a clear line of demarcation as to the cost chargeable against the Forests Department, and the cost chargeable against prison reform. Again, the hon. member mentioned royalties. I agree with him that as a State we have not been receiving sufficient from those who have been taking this wealth and exporting it. Especially on timber cut for export purposes

the royalty should be higher. The timber is valuable, and those who want it should pay its value. But I wish the hon. member to appreciate the fact that while we can propose things, we cannot always succeed in doing just exactly what we desire.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is not the only country with timber.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. We have already notified, through the "Government Gazette," that the royalties recommended by the Commission shall operate as from the 1st January of next year. Already the sawmillers have protested against the increased royalties, as being unsatisfactory and inequitable.

Mr. Marshall: Did the sawmillers put up a good case?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They made that statement, at all events. I suppose they will go on protesting. However, it is not possible to make a scale of royalties absolutely satisfactory from the point of view of its operating uniformly against all individuals. One piece of timber country may be well worth £1 per load royalty; another piece may not be worth more than 5s. per load. Again, some forests are distant from ports, with consequently high freights, while others are near ports, with correspondingly low freights. All these matters have to be taken into account, and therefore every case must be treated on its merits. While accepting the Commission's recommendations, the Government propose to give those sawmillers who have objections to make an opportunity of putting up their case. If they can submit a case showing that they will be seriously affected, we are prepared to reconsider the matter. But as from the 1st January next the royalties recommended by the Commission will be put into operation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I suppose that as far as possible all the recommendations of the Commission will be put into force.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. I shall mention some others later. The points I have now mentioned were, I think, the main points made by the hon. member in his speech. Now I wish to deal briefly with the Government's attitude towards other recommendations of the Commission. One recommendation was that the control of the Forests Department should be vested in the Conservator as set forth in the Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I am against that, to start with.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member interjecting is a man after my own heart. I think Parliament should control every Government function. However, Parliament at one time thought otherwise. The Commission recommended unanimously that the practice now operating in this respect should continue, and I am not going to quarrel with that. Mr. Kessell has been appointed Conservator with the powers which the Act vests in that officer. Until the Act is amended, he is entitled to carry out the

functions imposed on him by Parliament, and the revenues earmarked for certain purposes will be available to him. The Commission's recommendation on that point has been accepted by the Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I hope not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We cannot do otherwise.

Mr. Corboy: You can bring in an amending Bill.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Now the hon. member is quarrelling with his own representative on the Commission. I desire to say, however, that a proper appreciation of all that is required for the maintenance of our valuable forests points to the probability of its being necessary, for a number of years at all events, to place in control of the Forests Department someone not merely with a knowledge of forestry and a knowledge of what has occurred in the working of our forests, but someone who may be in a position of sufficient independence to prevent, if necessary, a Treasurer who may for the moment be in difficulties, from withholding funds needed for work that is in progress.

Mr. Corboy: That should be left to Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But it is necessary to have a forests policy spread over a number of years. We may start something this year and then, if the Treasurer puts the screw on next year, everything done will be spoiled. There must be continuity in the forests policy if the State is to get results from its expenditure. At any rate, the Government do not propose any immediate change in that respect. A further recommendation of the Royal Commission is the appointment of an advisory board of two to act with the Conservator. I may say at once that the Government are not accepting that recommendation. We are not able to see how a board acting with the Conservator could improve upon the present position. Neither are we able to see whom we could get to sit on an advisory board of that description whose opinions we could accept as being of sufficient weight to justify us in adopting them if they differed from the opinions of a trained forester; that is, unless we appointed to the board somebody interested in the trade. Under existing conditions it is not possible for the Forests Department to carry on operations for the whole of the 12 months in every year without occasionally hitting up, and pretty hard too, against interested people: our sawmillers, for instance. It is not desirable that persons so interested should be placed in the position of carrying on State functions. Therefore the Government do not propose to make any alterations in the existing state of affairs as regards that matter. It is infinitely better that the Government should accept the recommendations of a trained forester than that the functions of the Forests Department should be vested partly in someone who is directly affected by the functioning of that department. Further,

the Commission recommended that loan funds be provided for expenditure on afforestation of conifers to the extent experiment may warrant. We have made a commencement in that respect. Last year we provided £2,000 for the purpose, and we are hoping to provide a further amount this year, so that the work may go on without interruption, on the basis suggested by the Commission. The Commission also recommend the extension of the timber area reserved at Collie for mining purposes. That recommendation will become operative in connection with the dedication of State forests. Another recommendation is that the Government tuart mill be placed under the control of either the Railway Department or the State Sawmills, and that the position as regards the tuart mill be reviewed. That, after all, is a matter of departmental working. So far as we can judge, neither the Railway Department nor the State Sawmills is anxious to take over the mill. For the last six months of its working, the mill showed a profit of £315, after payment of interest and the usual depreciation. In some respects it is better that the tuart mill should be operated under the Forests Department, who operate it with an eye to the interests of the tuart forest, than that it should be handed over to the Railway Department, who would not care what happened with regard to the timber afterwards, or to the State Sawmills, who would operate the mill merely with a view to trade and commerce. The present intention is to work the tuart mill merely whenever that timber is required for home consumption. Since the Commission made their recommendation for the establishment of fire look-outs, we have erected in the Collie district a timber tower 80 ft. high, from which a view of the entire Collie basin can be obtained. The tower proved very effective even last year, under difficulties which we hope to overcome. The structure is important and interesting, as showing what can be done with timber. On that tower the department keep someone constantly on the watch throughout the day during the summer months. The watchman has in front of him a map with complete particulars of the forest country under his observation, and he is furnished with all instruments necessary for seeing over a great distance. Last year we even had a German range-finder there, the instrument having been kindly lent to us by Mr. Drummond. With the aid of that the watchman was able to locate the very spot where smoke was rising out of a forest. By compressing forestry operations into a few months, instead of spreading them over the whole 12, the department are able to have a considerable number of men available to combat any forest fire which may break out. If a forest fire gets up to the raging point, I am afraid that nothing can be done except let it go on until it reaches a natural fire-break. There is no likelihood of suppressing it otherwise. But if one can get on to

a fire in its early stage, something can be done. It is an astonishing thing to say, but it is a fact, that the majority of the fires in that area were proved to have been deliberately started for the purpose of burning up the undergrowth with a view to securing a good growth of grass for cows in the following year. The attitude is a most amazing one for the public to adopt towards forests producing valuable timber, because it means the destruction not so much of the mature trees as of the young trees which should replace the timber that is felled. One of our difficulties was to communicate the locality of a fire to men working in a remote part of that huge area: the radius is one of nine miles from the tower. We have a wire telephone from Collie to the tower, and news of a fire, as soon as it is located, is telephoned into Collie. Then somebody there has to pass on the information to men who may be working six miles in the opposite direction from Collie. He has to travel by motor car or by horse and cart, according to the state of the roads, to the spot where the men are working, and then to convey the men, by similar means, to the locality of the fire. Sometimes it means that the men get to the fire many hours late. Very frequently a fire gets a good start, because the mischievous people who burn the forests start the fire in a face. We are now trying to arrange to communicate with the men in the bush by wireless. The Amalgamated Wireless Company of Australia have undertaken, by agreement, to test the possibilities of having a small sending set at the tower and a small receiver wherever there is a gang of workmen. Then, as soon as a fire is located, a message would be sent by wireless to the men advising them of the spot, and they could arrive on the scene promptly.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is a squandering of money.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member may be right, but I am interested to such an extent in the preservation of our forests that I am going to try the wireless scheme.

Mr. Corboy: What will the experiment cost?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Nothing, except a small amount for the conveyance of the plant to the spot. The company have to provide the instruments and operate them under actual working conditions, so as to show that they can do what they claim to be able to do. If we are going on with our fire-control system in the forests, we must have a wire telephone that will cost infinitely more for one wire to the lookout than it would to equip the forest with wireless.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What about the wind blowing the wires down?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That might happen to the wire telephone, but could not affect the wireless. We are at least trying out the possibility of keeping in close touch with the men working in the forest. The Commission recommended that the use of the

most approved spark arrester be enforced for certain areas during certain periods of the year. We have not yet been able to definitely decide which is the most approved spark arrester. Up to date it has not been necessary to legislate in this direction, as sawmilling companies have voluntarily tested various types of spark arresters and, when requested, have fitted the type giving the most satisfactory results. The Commission recommended that conifers of different varieties be experimented with, and that *pinus pinaster* and other approved varieties be planted extensively. We have obtained species of a number of different conifers from America, and are testing them in various localities. A small experimental nursery has been started at Albany, and a number of species new to the State will be tried-out in that district. The Commission recommended that the Gibraltar-Gnarlbine forest reserve be extended to the west. We are looking at the question of State forests on the goldfields in a new light. I do not agree with the Commission on this question. I do not think our goldfields reserves are worth anything. When a forest reserve is made on the goldfields, the timber in that reserve can be used by any mine discovered within the boundaries of the reserve, but cannot be used by any mine outside those boundaries. It means that we are preserving an area of matured forest in the hope that it may be wanted 20 years hence. So, for the sake of posterity we are allowing 10 per cent. of the forest to become over-matured, while we are forcing struggling mining companies to go miles beyond for their firewood supplies. In my view we can afford to let posterity look after its own firewood. Under the existing system we are imposing a considerable burden on the mining companies just because some day some company, as yet unthought of, may want the timber. I do not agree with the reservation of large areas of forests of other than a commercial timber merely on the possibility of its being required in a dim and distant future. The Commission recommended that when granting tramway permits convenience of mining fields on prospective routes be considered. It is not as simple as it looks to divert a tramline five miles. It is not practicable. To do that would be to add greatly to the cost of the firewood. I was along one of the woodlines the other day, when I discovered that from about 40 miles out the load is practically switchbacked down into Kalgoorlie. To deviate that line five miles might mean that a powerful engine, perhaps even two engines, would be required to take the load into Kalgoorlie. Under existing conditions, I am not prepared to take any action that will have the effect of even giving any excuse for increasing the cost of firewood essential to the production of gold. It is not desirable that we should force the timber companies to divert their tramlines. They have shown themselves responsive in giving railway facilities to any mines existing in districts through which their lines are laid. There-

fore, when it is found necessary to take tram-lines into new fields, it will be wise to confer with the companies rather than dictate to them. The Commission recommended that the establishment of wood-pulp works for dealing with karri regrowth and regeneration be encouraged, and the utilisation of karri poles in substitution for jarrah. These are matters which the department can influence only by advertising our resources. Active steps in this direction are being taken. We hope to take advantage of the British Empire Exhibition to display the possibilities of our timbers, particularly karri, for wood-pulp. The Commission recommended that the principle of marking and cutting poles likely to be destroyed during felling operations be adopted. To put this recommendation into effect requires (a) that the sawmilling companies be prepared to establish depôts in which standard sized poles should be held until orders are available, (b) that the department have the necessary trained staff for the marketing of poles. This matter has been discussed with the principal sawmillers, but it has not yet been practicable to give effect to the recommendation, although its soundness is recognised. The Commission recommended that pure karri country should not be alienated for any purpose. I do not know that that recommendation can be accepted in its entirety. We propose to dedicate prime karri country, but there are certain other tracts of karri country which might well be made available for cultivation.

Mr. Lutey: As, for instance, down near Pemberton.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. However, pure karri country will not be interfered with. The Commission recommended that the control of the sandalwood industry be placed under the Forestry Department. That is the subject of discussion under a separate motion. The Commission recommended the immediate reservation of as large an area as practicable of sheoak country in the neighbourhood of Albany. A small area of sheoak country has been taken for certain agricultural experiments in that district, but a recent arrangement with the Lands Department should prevent any further destruction of this timber in country that might be described as pure sheoak. The Commission recommended that the planting of experimental areas with false acacia for the purpose of axe and other handles, be put in hand. In this I think we might well move a little slowly. We have already planted a small area of these species in several arboreta. Further confirmatory evidence of the high value of the timber grown under local conditions is necessary in view of the following quotation, taken from "Woodside and Woodland Trees," by Edward Step. He deals with the locust tree *Robinia pseud-acacia*). That is the tree the Commission recommended should be extensively planted for axe and other handles.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Before the tea adjournment I had reached the point when I was dealing with the recommendations of the Commission as to the planting of experimental areas of false acacia for the purpose of axe and other handles. I was explaining that we had already planted small areas with these species and I was just about to read what is published in a book entitled "Wayside and Woodland Trees," by Edward Step. This book deals with the particular species of tree known as the locust tree (*Robinia pseudacacia*). The writer says—

Although the locust, or false acacia, is little planted now, it is only paying the penalty for having had its merits enormously exaggerated; just as human reputations sometimes sink into oblivion after a season of popularity achieved by the persistent "booming" of influential friends. The friend in this case was William Cobbett, who, on his return from the United States, about 1820, preached salvation to the timber grower through the planting of Robinia; "nothing in the timber way could be so great a benefit as the general cultivation of this tree." So great was the demand thus created that Cobbett himself started a nursery for the propagation and supply of robinias, and so great is the virtue of a name that people refused the locust-trees that every nurseryman had in stock and wished to sell, and would be content with nothing but Cobbett's robinias, which could not be produced fast enough for the demand! They thought it was an entirely new introduction, though it had been grown in this country as an ornamental tree for nearly two centuries! Its wood is hard, strong and durable, but liable to crack and of limited utility.

With this before us, I do not think we can accept the recommendation of the Commission in its entirety. We shall have to turn to some other species of tree to obtain commodities of the nature mentioned. I have dealt with the question of fire-control systems. It is recommended that this system should be extended to karri forests as well. The only karri forest in which we can operate successfully in this direction is in the vicinity of Pemberton, but it is not practicable there. It is proposed as soon as it is found desirable and necessary, to commence fire-control in our karri forests as well. I have dealt with the question of investigations by the forest products laboratory. The Commission recommend that the problem of powellising karri poles to take the place of jarrah should be investigated. Inquiries have shown that the cost of treatment of karri poles by powellising would be prohibitive. It is not proposed, therefore, to introduce that system while we can obtain jarrah poles at a more reasonable price. The Commission recommend that the forests on all catchment areas be reserved and planted under the control of the Forests Department. Whilst these areas are not at present vested in the Forests Department, we are working in conjunction with the Goldfields Water Supply Department and the

Metropolitan Water Supply Department, and all cutting and removal of forest produce from these areas is under the control of our department. We are planting areas which have been resumed for the purpose of utilising the ground on the catchment areas which would otherwise be wasted. The Commission recommend that regulations should be framed to ensure the retention of sufficient trees on farms for shade, wind breaks and firewood purposes. This is more a matter of education than one of regulation. If we were to set out to make regulations in this direction, I do not see how they could be enforced. We are at present training one or two officers who will perhaps be able to assist in the desired direction later on. I do not know how soon we can commence to educate our farmers in the necessity for providing proper wind breaks or shade by maintaining the natural forest or planting other kinds of trees. Later on the department may see the wisdom of complying with this recommendation. The Commission recommend that a conference of sawmillers should be held with the Conservator to obtain their co-operation in cleaning up cut-out areas. We have not convened any conference. I do not know that it would be of very much value if we did. I cannot say, however, that we shall not accede to this recommendation at a later date. At the moment we are conferring with sawmillers and a system of top disposal, whereby fierce bush fires on cut-over areas will be prevented, has been inaugurated. With the assistance of the sawmillers that which has been done has prevented a number of bush fires which would have occurred had the tops been left lying about. The Commission recommend that the areas of permits be extended where conditions render it necessary for profitable cutting. We do not want any community to be established in a place that we know will be a cut-over area in eight or 10 years. The definite policy is now adopted that bush in proximity to existing mills is to be held against the time when it will be required for such mills rather than be thrown open with a view to the erection of new mills. We are, therefore, reserving as far as possible areas adjacent to existing mills in order to ensure something like permanency in the sawmilling areas. The Commission recommend that the royalty be immediately increased to prevent loss of revenue consequent upon reversion to Hoppus measurements. As we have not reverted to the system of measurement, no such increase has been necessary. The Commission also recommend that an additional arboreta be established. We are operating in conjunction with the Education Department to encourage schools to take an interest in the matter.

Mr. Underwood: That will be the end of it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think so. The hon. member suffers, apparently, from a lack of faith. What we are attempting to do is to get the schools interested and encourage the children to plant species of trees, that we will recommend, in

the form of plantations. We believe that parents and teachers' associations can help in this direction, and that this will serve to beautify the school grounds as well as utilise waste country. It may lead to an income and also to an improvement in the educational system in this connection. It will also serve as a useful experiment to prove that different species of trees can be grown in different areas. The Commission also recommend the establishment of a museum for the display of forest products.

Mr. Underwood: That is the stuff. What is that place in Barrack-street called?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is not a museum.

Mr. Underwood: What is it?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Barrack-street is the road to the Zoo. We are at present approaching the Public Service Commissioner in this matter. It is hoped that space for this purpose will be made available, and that it will be possible to have a museum for the display of our forest products in a suitable place for the public to visit. When this will be accomplished I am not in a position to say. We are, however, desirous of complying with this recommendation. It is a wise thing to display prominently in some suitable place the wealth of our forest products. It is also recommended that a forest primer should be introduced into our primary and secondary schools. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) will agree with that.

Mr. Underwood: Entirely.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Such a primer has been printed and introduced into the schools. I must apologise for not having submitted a proof of it to the hon. member so that he might say whether it is of interest to the schools, or is what he would term "tripe." A good deal can be taught to the children that may be very useful in the maintenance of our forests. We have quite a number of different types of winged creatures in the forests which do a tremendous amount of damage. We frequently protect these because of a lack of knowledge as to the damage they do. In other cases we destroy those things which possibly we ought to keep. We know nothing about these things. It is hoped by this method to teach our children about them so that we may be able to get some help in the direction desired.

Mr. Hughes: Like members of Parliament, they cannot be judged by appearances.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: These are practically all the recommendations of the Commission. I ask members to believe that so far as we have found it practicable and desirable we have put the recommendations into operation. Sometimes we have not adopted them in their entirety and sometimes we have not accepted them, but generally speaking we have complied with them so far as possible. We believe that the Commission were in earnest, and we are anxious to do everything possible to assist

in the maintenance and improvement of the growth of our timbers. The Commission did excellent work. At first I had some misgivings about it. I will be candid enough to say I was doubtful whether the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering), as chairman of the Commission, had sufficient knowledge of forestry, or of the methods by which he could obtain information, to enable him to come to a decision that would have sufficient weight in any recommendation the Commission might make. After perusing the report most carefully and submitting it to our experts in the Forests Department, I desire, on behalf of the department, to congratulate the hon. member, the member for Forrester (Mr. O'Loughlen) and the member for Perth (Mr. Mann), for the care they displayed in collecting the evidence and for the trouble they took in carrying out their duties, and seeing for themselves and satisfying themselves, not merely on verbal evidence, but by going to various parts of the State, and even beyond the State to Queensland.

Hon. P. Collier: Even to Queensland!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Even the trip to Queensland, I believe, was beneficial although I objected to it at the time. Not so much did I object to the hon. member going to Queensland as to his defiance of the powers that be. Even to that extent, I believe I was wrong. The hon. member did good work as chairman of the Commission.

Hon. P. Collier: Will you do the fair thing now?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Government have accepted the recommendations of the Royal Commission in the spirit in which they were made, namely a keen desire to educate the public by applying methods that were thought to be desirable, without unduly restricting the operations of those who are producing a marketable commodity, and at the same time reserving it for posterity instead of destroying it. The Government are with the hon. member to the extent I have outlined, and having heard my statement in regard to what we have done, and what we propose to do, I hope he will withdraw the motion.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex—in reply) [7.48]: I do not propose to detain the House at any length, but I would like briefly to express my appreciation of the remarks of the Minister, and for the manner in which they have been received by the House. I assure members that the motives that actuated the Commission over which I had the honour to preside were purely in the best interests of the State. The manner in which the recommendations have been acted upon and received by Parliament is also evidence that the work of the Commission was recognised as having been of some value. I regret very much that the member for Forrester (Mr. O'Loughlen) is not here to express his views on this subject. I wish to reply briefly to one or two points raised by the Minister. The one important recommenda-

tion submitted by the Commission is undoubtedly that relating to the permanent dedication of the forest country for proper forestry treatment. I trust the Minister will give effect to that at the earliest possible moment. So much depends upon the immediate dedication of our forests, and their being brought under the control of the department. The small area of valuable timber possessed by us compared with the enormous territory of the State is sufficient to prove that there is urgent need to take steps in the direction suggested by the Commission. We are told that we have only 75,000 acres of first-class karri country. Had the views of the House been sought on the subject I am convinced that that opinion would have been expressed by way of millions instead of thousands of acres. The small areas of tingle-tingle, tuart and sheoak are also evidence of the need for protecting these timbers which are not to be found in any other part of the world, and which are of considerable value to Western Australia. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) said that there were timbers in other countries of the world. We are aware of that, but if we take the evidence submitted to us, we will learn that the timber in other countries will in the not distant future be required by those countries. The serious aspect which confronts the world to-day is sufficient to indicate that there is need to take steps to protect the timber that we have, and I trust the utmost expedition will be shown in doing this.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That has been said for a considerable time past.

Mr. PICKERING: Notwithstanding the fact that it has been said before, very little heed has been taken of it, and as I have had the experience of trying to awaken public interest in Western Australia through the medium of the Forestry League, I know how great the difficulty is. Therefore I am glad of the assurance given by the Minister that efforts are being made to educate the young on the subject of forestry. I believe that the solution respecting the future lies in the education of the young. If the youth of the State are trained in the direction suggested, I am convinced there will be hope for the future. There is urgent necessity for the planting of softwoods in Western Australia, and as extensively as possible, if we are to place credence on reliable authorities that there is likely to be a world shortage. Regarding the control of forests, I am satisfied that the proper form is that which is provided in our Act. The Queensland Government propose to follow our example in this respect. When I was in Brisbane the question was under consideration, and so satisfied were the authorities with the nature of our legislation that the Minister for Forests, Mr. Coyne, stated it was his intention to model the proposed legislation on the lines of the Western Australian Act. It is essential that there should be a continuity of policy, and to per-

mit of that being carried out it is important that the control of the funds should be vested in the Forests Department. It is useless for any country to undertake a forestry policy unless it is prepared to see it through. If a policy fails through want of funds, we might just as well save those funds by not entering upon it at all. Therefore I trust the House will see to it that failure does not take place in this State. The recommendation of the Commission in respect of the goldfields wood lines is due to the evidence submitted when the members of the Commission visited the goldfields. We were approached in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in connection with operations at St. Ives, Hampton Plains and another field upon which Mr. Hedges' company was operating. Representations were made to the Commission that certain areas should be reserved for the use of these localities, and it was upon the evidence tendered that we made our recommendation for the extension of the areas mentioned by the Minister. Regarding the acacia, when we were at Yarloop some of this timber was shown to the Commission and was put through a severe test. We had the opinion of experts to assist us, and we were satisfied that it was excellent timber for axe handles. This country is deficient in timber that may be used for such a purpose, and we thought it well to experiment. We regret to learn now that the timber is not of the value that we thought. It is important, however, that we should find a timber which will meet this requirement. On the subject of exhibits, I assure hon. members that in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne there are excellent museums in which the native timbers are well displayed. It is only right that we, too, should have an exhibition of our timbers.

Mr. Underwood: For what purpose?

Mr. PICKERING: To educate the people in the direction in which the timbers may be used. Anyone who will take the trouble to visit the present exhibition of timber in Barrack-street will appreciate the value and importance of it, and will also recognise what an excellent advertisement it must prove for the State. In view of the complete statement made by the Minister, and the intention he expressed to give effect to many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, I ask permission to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

#### MOTION — RAILWAYS, PENSION RIGHTS OF J. B. CONNOLLY.

*To inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from 12th September on the motion by Mr. Hughes—

*That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the pension rights under the provisions of the Superannuation Act, 1871, of John Bede Connolly, formerly clerk in the Railway Department.*

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [7.55]: The question of the retirement of an officer of the Railway Department does not come under the direction of the Minister; it is a matter for the Commissioner and the heads of the branches of the service. The case of Connolly, which the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) suggests should be inquired into by select committee was not brought under my notice as Minister until it was mentioned in the House. I learn that Connolly joined the service as a cadet in 1897, and was engaged in different services until 1915. By that time he should have shown some proficiency. I find that he was, in July of that year, recommended by the then Chief Traffic Manager for a position in his office as record clerk. This is the recommendation made by the then Chief Traffic Manager—

Mr. Connolly is an expert in record work, having spent the whole of his service in it, and although there are a number of clerks senior to him in the classification receiving £200 per annum, they would not be able to fill the post so well, and I could not recommend any of them in preference to Mr. Connolly for this particular class of work, the same as I could not recommend Mr. Connolly for a purely clerical position in the higher grade. He is specially adapted as a record clerk, whereas he would not be suitable on purely clerical work. On the grounds that his special, and perhaps only forte, so far as his service in this department is concerned, is record work, and that he should be kept at such, I recommend his appointment as clerk in charge of my record room at a salary of £210 per annum as from 1/7/1915.

The recommendation was adopted, but while Connolly was appointed to that position it was not to be expected that the department should find the particular class of work that was suitable for an officer of that type and retain him for a term of his natural life because he happened to be able to do a particular job satisfactorily, and no other. In the Public Service a man should become not only proficient in keeping records but in general clerical work and, in the case of a railway employee, in the knowledge of the railway working, so as to secure for himself promotion to higher positions. A man who chooses to be satisfied with what he can get, merely to do what comes to him and not seek to improve his position should not be retained by the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: But do you not get the best results from specialists?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not in every case, as I intend to show. Connolly continued in that position for 12 months, namely, till July, 1916. At the end of that period, the Chief Traffic Manager reported that on account of the unsatisfactory way Connolly was carrying out his duties—

Hon. P. Collier: The Chief Traffic Manager was a bad judge then!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I anticipated that something of the sort would be said, and the Leader of the Opposition has said it for me. The Chief Traffic Manager said that on account of the unsatisfactory way Connolly was carrying out his duties and his unsatisfactory conduct in connection with financial transactions with other members of his staff, he could not retain Connolly in the record office. The Chief Traffic Manager recommended that Connolly's salary should be reduced by £20 per annum and that he should be removed to the goods office. I did not wish to refer to these matters, and I gave the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) warning on more than one occasion that if he pressed this matter in Parliament, it would be as well for members to know the facts.

Mr. Hughes: We are quite prepared to have a full public inquiry concerning all these matters, including the financial transactions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member only asks for an inquiry concerning Connolly's pension rights under the Superannuation Act. I propose to show that Connolly was retired from the service under such circumstances that he was not entitled to a pension. The Chief Traffic Manager's recommendation was given effect to, and Connolly exercised his right of appeal to the Railway Appeal Board. On that board the Commissioner had his representative and Connolly, or the union representing Connolly, had a representative. The man's appeal was dismissed by the board, whose decision was unanimous.

Hon. P. Collier: Was that regarding his retirement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, as to his retrogression. Connolly was given every opportunity to become efficient in the work of the goods office, but he failed to do so. He was, in fact, carrying out work that could have been done by a junior clerk. After six years in the goods office, during which he had failed to carry out his duties satisfactorily, it was decided to dispense with his services. The member for East Perth said that Connolly had been given an opportunity to qualify as an auditor in two months. That statement was not correct; it may be correct as conveyed to the hon. member. The fact remains that Connolly was not asked to qualify as an auditor. It is well known to hon. members that the Railway Department maintains railway institutes in different centres. At those institutes classes are held regularly, and railway employees are encouraged to attend them in order to become more proficient. In the process of becoming efficient as railway employees, they also gain advantage as individuals. It is not merely a question of the Railway Department benefiting, but of the individual as well. Connolly avoided this additional opportunity, and was content to jog along, irrespective of warnings; content to come to the office, do the work required of him, and return home in the after-

noon, without attempting in any way to make himself more proficient. Among the subjects taught at the Railway institutes is railway accounts work. Until 1922 Connolly failed to avail himself of the opportunities presented by these classes. Imagine a man in the service, with these classes available, and yet content not to seize the opportunity to improve his position! Connolly joined as a cadet in 1897 and it was not till 1922 that he thought it worth while to attend the classes to become more proficient in his work. In 1922 the classes started on the 8th March. Connolly commenced to attend on the 9th May and attended on eight occasions to the 22nd June. He again attended on the 13th July. On the 15th August, after Connolly had received the notice terminating his service, he saw the Commissioner and asked for two months' grace to enable him to pass the railway accounts examination. The Commissioner agreed and told Connolly that if he passed the examination the question of the termination of his services would be reconsidered.

Mr. Hughes: What examination was he expected to pass?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That does not matter.

Mr. Hughes: Oh, no!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It does not matter, because I want to explain what led to Connolly's retirement to show that he was not entitled to receive a pension. When it was decided to terminate Connolly's services, that decision was not arrived at for the purpose of making room for some other officer or to effect economies; it was merely because Connolly had shown himself unsatisfactory in his work and because of the financial transactions. Connolly was actually filling a position that could have been held by a junior, because he declined to make use of the opportunities available to become more proficient.

Member: He was given generous treatment.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: So he was. Later Connolly again saw the Commissioner, in company with the secretary of his union. He told the Commissioner he was not prepared to carry out the arrangement arrived at that morning.

The Colonial Secretary: What happened in between times?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I wonder. The accounts examination in question is a very elementary one and any youth with a little application would have no difficulty in passing the test. At the last examination 15 men, averaging 22 years of age, passed without difficulty. Apparently Connolly receded from his agreement with the Commissioner because, after consulting with the union officials, he was afraid he would not pass the examination. By reason of his own unsatisfactory conduct, Connolly showed himself unqualified to fill the position and he made no attempt to qualify himself for any other post. Taking these circumstances into account, is it a fair thing to indulge in constant



criticism of Government departments and to join with the crowd outside in condemning the Public Service, because here and there we find officers who are not as proficient as they should be? Are we to be expected to stick to the old system of promotion by seniority and not give encouragement to those officers who seek to improve themselves and to qualify for higher offices? Are we to take men into the Public Service and give them permanency of employment with inevitable promotion, merely because they can behave themselves? We have reached the stage when we should tell men that we do not engage them merely to give them a means of earning a livelihood, but that we expect of them something more. We shall expect them to render public service by utilising to the best advantage the time available to them to improve their positions. We should not allow them to become stumbling blocks to bar the progress of other officers. Here is a man who joined in 1897 and when he was retired was on the minimum wage for an adult worker! That in itself is evidence that Connolly had made no attempt to improve his position.

Mr. Mann: That would not be exceptional in the Government service.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It may not be exceptional, but I know of no other case.

Mr. Corboy: I can give you other instances in the Public Service, not in the Railway Department.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If a man joins up as a cadet in 1897, and when he is retired in 1922 is in receipt of only a minimum adult worker's wage, he is—

Mr. Teesdale: Not much chop.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It shows that something is radically wrong.

Mr. Hughes: The best man in the military service was on the bottom run all the time and I can prove that to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know that the hon. member could prove that assertion to me.

Mr. Teesdale: He may try.

Mr. Corboy: At any rate, the conditions of the Public Service have a good deal to do with this position.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the conditions in the Public Service, whether in the railways or under the Public Service Act, are such that a man can remain from 1897 until 1922 and not get beyond the minimum adult wage, there is something wrong with the individual, or something radically wrong with the service.

Mr. Corboy: I know of temporary officers who have been employed for 10 years and are still in receipt of the minimum wage.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Their positions may not be on all fours with the one under discussion. If an individual leaves school at the age of 14 or 15, after having learnt to read and write, and takes a position in which he is content to remain without making any attempt to improve and qualify for higher positions, what can be expected? If a man is

content to go to work at 9 o'clock—to be correct, at five minutes past nine—I do not wish to be unjust even to a public servant—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is against yourself, if you allow that to occur.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is under the regulations!

Mr. Hughes: Anyhow, the statement is not true. The majority of the officers go to work in good time.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Even so, it has nothing to do with the point. If an officer is content to go to work in accordance with the regulation time, and leave again on regulation time, and displays no ambition whatever, and does not render satisfactory service, it is time something was done.

Hon. P. Collier: There are always some officers on the minimum; there is no room for all on the higher grades.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Apart from that, the mere passing of an examination does not say that the successful candidate is the best man.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. The fact remains that, after being all these years in the service, Connolly did not see fit to avail himself of the opportunities afforded by the institute classes until 1922.

Mr. Corboy: But his is not an isolated case.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That may be so, but if there are many such cases as his, I hope pensions will not be paid to them.

Mr. Mann: You followed wrong lines when you got rid of him.

Mr. Underwood: Yes, you should have kept him on. Once he was in he should have been allowed to stop in.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: From Connolly's point of view we followed wrong lines, and even according to the hon. member we should have retained his services despite his incompetence. If the hon. member will look up the records of Parliamentary action taken in protection of public servants he will find there is more to my credit than to the credit of any other hon. member. However, I am not standing for the man who imagines he can join the Public Service, merely attend during office hours, be paid a reasonable wage, obtain concessions not open to outsiders and then, at the end of his period, secure a pension.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If he puts in his years he is entitled to it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, he is not. The Superannuation Act does not give anybody the right to a pension. It merely makes it possible in given circumstances for the Governor-in-Council to grant a pension. There is nothing mandatory about it. The Government agreed to appoint a board of public servants to decide whether another public servant is entitled to receive a pension. That board's recommendations have never yet been refused. In this case Connolly has been treated on the same basis as have others. The Commissioner was not prepared

to give him the necessary certificate that his services had been diligent. Connolly is not entitled to receive so much consideration at the hands of the taxpayer, who must find the money for pensions. I have been here since 1904, and I have scarcely known a session in which no member has aired the grievance of a public servant. There is in Australia no other section of workers that has the same protection as have the public servants in Western Australia. Nevertheless Parliament is asked to appoint a select committee to inquire why Connolly did not get a pension. I ask the House to consider whether it is worth while appointing a select committee to inquire into the pension rights of a public servant such as Connolly. Because responsible officers do not feel that Connolly is deserving of a pension, we are to take steps to recompense this public servant. Responsible officers have already dealt with this case, and personally I do not think Connolly is entitled to consideration, either from the House or from a select committee.

Mr. CORBOY (Yilgarn) [8.20]: The Minister this evening has attempted to bluff through one of the worst cases he has ever handled. He has been here for 18 or 19 years, yet never before has he had so weak a case as this.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know that you can make a case by such statements.

Mr. CORBOY: I will attempt to make a case, and I hope it will not be as weak as that of the Minister. Despite the fact that public servants have all the measures of protection alluded to by the Minister, it does not prevent occasional cases of injustice. Only last session Parliament attempted to right an injustice inflicted on a public servant during the war. From my experience in the service I can assure the Minister there are on the minimum wage many men who have been years in the service and who are valuable officers. There is not room for all to rise. Those above do not die or leave, and so there is no opportunity for promotion. I know a man who was employed for many years as a temporary hand on the minimum wage. When the department was reorganised, the new permanent heads discovered that this man was so valuable that they appointed him to the permanent staff and gave him charge of about 20 men.

The Minister for Works: Apparently he studied and qualified himself.

Mr. CORBOY: He was fully qualified before joining the service.

The Minister for Mines: But Connolly was not.

Mr. CORBOY: Connolly was employed when the present Minister for Works was Commissioner of Railways. If Connolly was unsatisfactory for 25 years, why did not the Minister for Works, when Commissioner of Railways, remove him?

Mr. Latham: He may not have come into contact with Connolly.

Mr. CORBOY: There was not anyone, not even the youngest porter, with whom the Minister did not come into conflict when he was there.

The Colonial Secretary: If, in spite of that, Connolly failed, how much more would he have failed under an ordinary man?

Mr. CORBOY: The Minister for Mines said Connolly had given unsatisfactory service for 25 years. If that be so, what were all the various departmental heads doing that they did not deal with Connolly as an unsatisfactory officer? If that statement be true, those permanent heads were not attending to their duty.

The Minister for Mines: I did not make such a statement.

Mr. CORBOY: If the Minister did not say that, I do not know what he did say.

Mr. Mann: That is what he implied.

The Minister for Mines: I did not even imply it.

Mr. CORBOY: Then, according to the Minister, Connolly gave perfectly satisfactory service for a number of years, after which he suddenly became inefficient.

The Minister for Mines: I did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. CORBOY: Well, what is the Minister's contention? Unless the Minister implied that Connolly's services were unsatisfactory, I do not know what he did mean. On the 12th July, 1915, the Chief Traffic Manager, referring to Connolly in a report, said this—

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member reading from "Hansard"?

Mr. CORBOY: I have another copy of this report, but I have mislaid it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then the hon. member will read from that other copy.

Mr. CORBOY: I now have it. The Chief Traffic Manager said—

I notified Connolly at the time that if he gave satisfaction after a reasonable time I would be prepared to consider his claims to the position. He has been in charge of the office since September, 1914, and has conducted the work efficiently and economically. He has one cadet less than his predecessor had, and no extra hand was appointed when Connolly's predecessor left the office. So there is a saving of Mr. Larkin's salary £220, and the cadet £60, or £280 per annum in all, although the volume of work remains much the same.

With a clear saving of £280 per annum in salaries, Connolly had dealt with the work efficiently and economically. That was the considered opinion of the Chief Traffic Manager after 10 months trial. That was still the position when it was decided to retire Connolly. I am convinced that Connolly's immediate superior heads were still of the opinion that he had carried out the work efficiently and economically. That contention is borne out by the notice of dismissal

that Connolly received on July 22nd, as follows:—

Owing to the depression in trade and consequent necessity for retrenchment, there is now no position where you could be suitably placed, and it has become necessary to dispense with your services. Now where is the Minister's assertion that this man was dismissed because of inefficiency? The only reason the Minister can find for refusing this man his pension is the statement that he was dismissed for inefficiency. Yet the dismissal notice, signed by the Chief Traffic Manager, says he is being retired because of depression in trade and consequent need for retrenchment—in other words, Connolly was retired as an excess officer. The Minister may shake his head as much as he likes, but here are the documents and he cannot bluff through on this case.

The Minister for Mines: If you saw the file, you would not talk about bluff.

Mr. CORBOY: I do not contend that Connolly was qualified to take the position of Chief Traffic Manager or Commissioner of Railways; I am not suggesting he was a colossus of intellect or was so bubbling over with energy and ability that it was a crying shame the State should lose his services, but the Department did not retire him because of inefficiency. The Chief Traffic Manager asserted definitely at the end of 10 months' trial that Connolly had done his work efficiently and economically. I am satisfied when it was desired to retrench in the service, Connolly was retired because possibly he was the least efficient of the officers, but not because he was inefficient. It was because he was an excess officer. The departmental documents clearly show the position. After it was decided to dispense with his services, the department looked around for means to deal with him as cheaply as possible. That is what it comes down to. Finally they took the stand that they would give him 12 months' salary as a retiring allowance. This clearly demonstrates the weakness of the department's case. If they are truthful in asserting that Connolly was retired because of inefficiency, then he was not entitled to receive a half-penny of the State's money. If it was right to retire him because his services were unsatisfactory, it was not right to give him 12 months' salary.

The Minister for Works: That may have been done out of compassion.

Mr. CORBOY: The Minister might do a lot of things out of compassion. The notice also deals with this aspect and I remind members that compassionate allowances are shown as such on the Estimates. The dismissal notice states clearly—

Approval has been given to your being granted a retiring allowance equivalent to 12 months' pay.

On the investigations I have made, I am satisfied the Department were looking for the cheapest method of dealing with this man, and in order to try to get his silence, they

decided to give him 12 months' salary. Connolly accepted the 12 months' salary under protest. I presume he was in a position in which he had little choice. If a civil servant is to give a quarter of a century's faithful service to the country and at the conclusion is to be jockeyed out of his rights as this man undoubtedly has been, it will serve the Government right if they get the kind of service they are looking for. As one acquainted with the civil service, despite the assertions of the Minister about its privileges, I say there will be no security for any of those privileges if individuals are to be treated as this man has been. I sincerely hope the House will agree to the appointment of a select committee to inquire thoroughly into this case, because similar cases may crop up in future unless this decision is reversed. I hope the select committee will be the means of that end being attained.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [8.34]: I support the motion for a select committee. I am not concerned about Connolly's efficiency, but I am concerned about the fact that a Government servant has been dismissed under certain conditions. His position carried certain privileges and those privileges he has not obtained. If a departmental head can get rid of an employee as an excess officer and, instead of granting his pension rights can tell him he is dismissed because of inefficiency, no Government servant will be secure. We shall not get efficiency in the service if this sort of thing is permitted. Men getting on in years and incapable of the activity of former years will feel that their positions are insecure. I have read the file, I think the Government could have proved that Connolly was not efficient for the position, but they should have adopted the course of charging him with being inefficient and giving him an opportunity to appeal.

Mr. Latham: It may have damaged him for the remaining portion of his life.

Mr. MANN: If he went to an appeal board and the board decided against him, that would have been the end of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There was no appeal in this case.

Mr. MANN: He was deprived of an appeal because the Commissioner would not give him a certificate and yet it is on record that he was efficient.

Mr. Corboy: The Commissioner said that by word of mouth; he did not sign it.

Mr. MANN: The servants of the State are entitled to security of tenure, and are entitled to know that their positions and privileges will be properly safeguarded.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East) [8.37]: I have not had an opportunity to read the file, but there is not the least doubt that any impartial person, after listening to the Minister's statements, could come to no other conclusion than that this man has been unfairly dealt with. It is true the officers employed by the Government enjoy certain priv-

ileges that other people do not enjoy. During last Parliament those privileges were extended, and the servants of the State are being brought under somewhat similar conditions to men in private employ. The time will arrive when the officers of the service will obtain privileges similar to those of men working for private firms. While we have an Arbitration Court to adjudicate for one lot of employees others on an almost similar footing have to avail themselves of courts of appeal. This man served for about a quarter of a century and on retiring was entitled to a pension, but the Act provides that before a pension can be granted, the head of the Department must certify that the officer's service has been satisfactory. In perusing some old blue books the other day, I noticed that in the days prior to responsible Government, a list of public servants was published every year and reference was made to those who had given satisfactory service. Thus there could be no claiming many years afterwards that a certain officer's service had not been satisfactory.

The Minister for Agriculture: What happened to those not on the list?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I assume that an average was taken over a number of years. If Connolly's service was not satisfactory, action should have been taken when that fact was discovered, and it should have been pointed out to him that he would not be entitled to pension rights. That was not done. He was retained in the service and, so far as I can gather, he did all that was required of him. The Minister has made a good deal of the fact that Connolly did not attend a school. In all probability he was not anxious to rise higher in the service, but that was a matter for himself. He knew well that if he did not fulfil certain requirements, he had no chance of being promoted. He was content to remain in the position he held and he suffered through not qualifying for a higher position; but the fact of his not qualifying would not justify the Government in depriving him of a pension in accordance with the salary he was drawing. If he had qualified for a higher position, he would have been entitled to a higher pension, which would have been based on the average salary he had been drawing for a period of years prior to his retirement. I do not know that the passing of examinations is very important. The other day I read an article in the "West Australian," in which Lord Birkenhead said he would not have any examinations at all. He said the professors who set the papers would be unable to answer the questions, and that the Lord Chief Justice of England would be unable to pass an examination in the law he had to administer. Lord Birkenhead believes in good honest practical work, not in theory. Unfortunately we are getting into a habit of attaching great importance to examinations. So long as a man can pass an examination, he is considered qualified to do certain work, though he may be the biggest duffer possible when

it comes to the practical side of the work. On the other hand a man who is smart at the practical work may be unable to pass an examination. If a person has served a certain period in a department that entitles him to a pension and has fulfilled the conditions of his employment, he should receive the pension. Those were the conditions of Connolly's employment. Looking back over the old blue books I noticed the name of the present member for Gascoyne frequently.

The Premier: Was he on the satisfactory list?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I think so.

Mr. Angelo: I did not get a pension, anyhow.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: These men commenced in low positions, and received paltry salaries. They took on this service because of the privileges that would be granted to them in the future.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think that has anything to do with the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Those who spent 25 or 30 years in the service and started under the old conditions hoped that the provisions of the Act would be applied to them as the years went by. This particular man accepted a lower salary, having a pension in view. It would not be a gift. He was getting a small salary so that he could receive a pension when he retired. The pension was part of his salary. I do not know the man, nor anything about the case except what the Minister has told us. Connolly spent 25 years in the service, and carried out the work allotted to him. Because he had no ambition to rise that is no reason why he should be debarred from the pension rights he is entitled to under the Act, except so far as a certificate is concerned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [8.47]: I do not know Connolly, or whether during my term of office as Commissioner of Railways I came into contact with him.

Mr. Hughes: I can assure you that you did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I may have done so, but I have forgotten it. A few remarks have been passed during the debate which members ought to consider. The last speaker stated that if a man remained for 25 years in the service, and did not care to qualify himself for a better position, that was no reason why he should not enjoy all the privileges of the service. I hope there are not many men like that, either in the railway service or the Public Service. Parents wish their boys to enter the public service so that they may get a chance of learning something by which they may improve their positions when they become men. What is the use of any boy who enters the service and is content to remain in the position of an office boy, without any ambition to rise to greater things? That is not the class of man that will do this State any good,

or serve any useful purpose in any walk of life. If a man finds he is not fitted for any particular service, and does not see in it any avenue for advancement, and he possesses the necessary stamina and determination to get on, he should look elsewhere. I have seen many men in the Public Service who have gone along and are still going along disappointed and disgruntled, who, if they had had the pluck to go out and work as labourers would probably be occupying high positions to-day. As it is, they are simply square pegs in round holes. I know very little about Connolly, except that he was engaged in the Chief Traffic Manager's office while I was Commissioner of Railways. I signed certain necessary formal documents to enable him to get consideration while he was ill, and to take certain holidays. This would not bring under my notice any special qualifications he may have possessed, nor indeed would it serve to bring him under the notice of any Commissioner. No head of a department can know every man under him. He comes into contact only with certain officers, and with a certain quantity of the work they do. If a boy had studied and had ambition to rise, and any specially good work of his came before a senior officer showing what was in the boy, he would at once be marked for promotion. I do not desire to claim any particular qualities for myself, but I always take particular notice of any minutes that come before me. If I find there is something in them that tells me the man behind the pen possesses undoubted qualifications, it is my duty to see that he is given a chance. In the case of Connolly I find that the Railway Association saw the Commissioner, who said:—

I told you I would very much prefer offering a man a job in a lower grade, but in Connolly's case we cannot. He is on the lowest grade now after 25 years' service. That being so, and it being a very solid opinion that nobody wants him, that he cannot be placed in any other job, we are giving him consideration for his long service, and treating him exactly the same as other officers of the Public Service.

The Commissioner said he would make inquiries, and send the matter on to the Public Service Commissioner for his views. The following memorandum was sent to Mr. Simpson from the office of the Commissioner of Railways:—

Clerk J. B. Connolly, who has been employed in a salaried position since 1897, has been reported as being a surplus officer, and approval was given to his being given a month's notice and granted payment of a year's salary as compensation for loss of office. Mr. Connolly, whilst being able to carry out the duties he has been employed on is not competent to take up other positions. The Railway Officers' Union has approached the Commissioner in connection with his case, and claimed that he should be granted an annual allowance under Section 6 of the Superannuation Act of 1871.

During the discussion it was stated that in the public service such officers were granted the annual allowance referred to in the preceding paragraph. The Commissioner will be glad if you will inform him of the practice followed by you in similar cases.

The answer of the Public Service Commissioner to the Commissioner of Railways is as follows:—

In commenting on your memo. I would point out that there is no obligation on the Government to find employment for Mr. Connolly; also, that in the event of an officer's work falling away so that there is no longer any justification for his employment, this would not justify a claim under the Superannuation Act, unless the officer concerned had attained the age of 60.

It seems to me that the case has been stated fairly well. I am sure every member will agree with me it should not go forth that because a boy enters the service he must remain there without any attempt to prove himself. In the Railway service officers have a chance of improving themselves in a special way. There is no railway institute in Australia that offers a better opportunity than ours for those in the service to acquire the requisite knowledge, not merely of ordinary commercial matters such as bookkeeping and accountancy, but of railway working and safe working, etc. If a boy likes to apply himself he has the opportunities to do so. In my time as a youngster I should have been glad to avail myself of them. If a boy does not attempt to improve himself so that he can be promoted, he should leave that avocation and seek something else. In the Public Works Department we have a boy who attends the telephone. I do not allow him to remain there listening to the bell. He has to study and will be given an opportunity later on to take a man's part. In the case of Connolly we have a man who entered the service in 1897, remained there for 25 years, and was apparently content to remain for a further quarter of a century, holding the same position and capable really of doing the work of a youth of 18 or 19. Members should take these points into consideration. If this sort of thing were to be general we should not be able to render to the public that service which the people have a right to expect from their officers.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [8.56]: I intend to support the motion. I have listened with great attention to the remarks of the Minister for Railways. I had hoped he would have offered some more satisfactory explanation of all that has gone before. In this case a young man entered the service in 1897, and the pension rights were only abolished in 1904. If, therefore, anyone is entitled to a pension this particular man is. There appears to be an attempt to throw doubt on these pension rights always when it comes to the point of having to grant them. At all events we know that this man joined the service as a boy as far back as 1897, and

continued in it until 1915. According to the Minister's explanation I should imagine that he might easily have been charged in 1915 with inefficiency, and with something that appears to be in the nature of wrong doing. Apparently his action was not such as to cause the department to feel that it had any legal right to take steps to get rid of him. He was, therefore, allowed to go on for another seven years. In the circumstances, therefore, it seems hardly fair that he should have been dismissed without any pension rights, seeing that when he joined the service he was entitled to expect that he would receive a pension upon retiring. It is all very well to talk about appealing to an outside court. All civil servants know what it is to attempt to have their cases so tried, how impossible the position is for them, and what a tangle has been made for them of the whole business. They have to get permission after permission in various directions, and they may die before their cases are heard. Therefore they generally decide upon some compromise, or to fight for their rights in any way possible. For these reasons I am prepared to support the motion for the appointment of a select committee. Our civil servants do not always get as fair a deal as they might in many ways, because the Act governing them is so complicated. It prevents them from getting the full measure of justice to which they are entitled. If Connolly was unfit for his position, he should have been dismissed long before. Apparently, however, this was not done and his unfitness was overlooked. I do not know the man or anything about him except what has been stated here, but I am prepared to support the motion for the reasons I have given.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth—in reply) [8.58]: I very much regret that the Minister for Railways left the Chamber after making his speech. I do not know whether any discourtesy was intended to me or the railway men.

The Colonial Secretary: He had other engagements.

Mr. HUGHES: I am glad to know that. I informed the House that the Commissioner had told a deputation that Connolly had served with diligence and fidelity to the satisfaction of the Commissioner. I thought the Minister would either have admitted or contested that statement, but he did neither. He said Connolly had remained for 25 years in the service, and had failed to attend a school. If we went through the public service and examined the careers of officers in high positions, I wonder how many we would find who had attended a class. I know of a man who, after working hard all his life, got into Parliament, and thus secured an opportunity to attend technical schools and improve himself. He remained in Parliament for seven years, but made no effort whatever to improve himself, although he knew that some day he would be Premier and Treasurer of this State. With the

Treasurership plum hanging in front of him, one would think, he would have said to himself, "Since I am likely to be Treasurer of this State, I am going to make myself an efficient accountant, so that I will have some qualifications for the Treasurership." But he sat down and did nothing until the job came along. That member of Parliament acted as Connolly acted. Connolly, although always hoping to become a responsible officer of the Government, sat down and made no attempt to qualify himself. Eventually he got a job under the Government, and the State had to pay for his failure.

The Premier: People do not always make successes of their ventures.

Mr. HUGHES: The member of Parliament I have in mind had plenty of leisure time and a splendid library at his disposal. Yet the Premier justifies him now.

The Premier: I was not referring to him.

Mr. HUGHES: I know the Premier attacked him unmercifully in the Chamber. Let me say again that if there is one class of work which will deaden initiative in a man it is record work—the receiving of papers, and laboriously sorting out the file to which a particular paper belongs, recording the paper in a register, and putting it away in a pigeon hole. It is work that certain men cannot perform. Brilliant men put on to work of that kind have failed because they lacked the requisite patience.

The Colonial Secretary: Does not that suggest that this man might have taken up some other work in his spare time, for recreation?

Mr. HUGHES: Does the Minister do that?

The Colonial Secretary: Of course I do.

Mr. HUGHES: What is it the Minister does?

The Colonial Secretary: I will tell you privately.

Mr. HUGHES: Record work needs an extremely methodical, plodding man. If the Public Service consisted of none but brilliant men, it would not function. What is the usual fate of a brilliant young man in the service? He qualifies wherever he can, and gets certain rises, and is considered to be on the high road to success, when he suddenly reaches a grade at which, before he can progress further, someone must die. Old and tried public servants of 20 years' standing are giving efficient service. Young men come along with certificates, and claim the jobs of those older men. But no Government would ever displace the older men on that account. A proposition was made to Connolly that he should pass an accountancy examination in two months' time. I venture to say the Minister for Railways could not do that, notwithstanding the fact of his having been Treasurer of Western Australia for years. Suppose Connolly had become a qualified accountant; would the Commissioner of Railways then have said, "Because Connolly is a qualified accountant, he shall have precedence of promotion over

every other man not so qualified"? That would not have been reasonable. But because Connolly did not qualify, he is to be told that he was inefficient. For the purposes of this argument, I care not whether Connolly was efficient or inefficient. If he was inefficient, he should have been charged with inefficiency and given a chance to defend himself. Instead of discharging Connolly as inefficient, the Commissioner of Railways retired him as an excess officer, and in those circumstances there is no right of appeal. If that right of appeal had been exercised by Connolly, his case would not have been brought before this Chamber by any member, I am quite sure. However, as an excess officer, Connolly had certain privileges, and he asked to be granted them. Then he was told, "Notwithstanding you have it in writing from the Railway Department that you were retired as an excess officer, we now tell you candidly that we dismissed you because of inefficiency, and we will not grant you those privileges." Such conduct amounts to a repudiation of the contract of service between Connolly and the Government. I do not ask the House to declare whether Connolly is or is not entitled to a pension. I say to hon. members, "In view of the surrounding circumstances of the case, will you grant an inquiry?" At the inquiry evidence may be produced which will convince me that I am wrong in my present view of the case. I have a perfectly open mind. If this motion is carried, and if evidence varying the information now before me is produced, I shall be the first to acknowledge that Connolly has no case. But what objection can there be to an investigation? In view of all the circumstances, an opportunity should be given for inquiry and report..

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

Ayes	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	15
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	4
				—

#### AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mann
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Stubbs
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Walker
Mr. Heron	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Munele
Mr. Lambert	

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Carter	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Durack	Mr. Sampson
Mr. George	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Latham	Mr. Underwood
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Mullany
Sir James Mitchell	

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Ballot taken and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Teesdale, Pickering, Munsie, Corboy, and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, to adjourn from place to place and to report on the 24th October.

## BILL—CONTROL OF RENTS.

### Second Reading.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [9.22] in moving the second reading said: Hon. members are well aware of the necessity for legislative provision which will in some way curb the actions and avarice of some landlords. That necessity has been recognised for some considerable time. In other parts of the world it has been found necessary to introduce legislation to deal with the problem. At the outset, I wish to emphasise the fact that there is nothing radical or new in legislative control of land. Hon. members will appreciate the fact that land is the one thing that is not the complete property of the owner. The basis of land tenure has always been recognised clearly. It is not that the land is the complete chattel-property of the owner but that it is his property only for the purpose of utilising it in rendering service to the State. That is the basis of British land tenure. No man can refuse the right of the Government to take possession of his land. His ownership does not extend to such a prohibition. Much of the position in which the landlord finds himself has been permitted because landlords have been in control of Governments and have been able to legislate for themselves greater privileges than it was intended they should have. We are not encroaching upon anyone's rights when we say by way of legislation to what purpose people shall put their land. I do not propose to discuss the question from an academic point of view but purely from what I regard as an urgent necessity in the interests of the State's welfare. During the present session I had occasion to bring under the notice of the House a landlord of Hay-street who purchased a property for £48,000 and fixed rents that would return him 21 per cent. per annum by way of interest. I do not propose to traverse all those details because hon. members can find them in "Hansard." I thought that some effort would be made to show that my statements were not correct. I thought the man in question would endeavour to obscure the issue, but evidently he is prepared to admit the charges against him. Documentary evidence can be produced to substantiate those charges. In order to produce evidence to the House that it is necessary to have supervision over the relations between landlord and tenant, I have made inquiries regarding the rate of interest being earned respecting landed properties and the conditions under which the landlord is exacting his rents. The first

quotation I have relates to premises in my own electorate of East Perth. They are known as Chipper's Terrace in Hay-street East. Before the Bill is finally passed, I hope some hon. members who are interested in the subject will join me in a slumming party. Such parties are quite the thing in New York and other big cities. I assure hon. members that they will find it well worth while to give half a day to participate in such a party.

Mr. Teesdale: Not in East Perth.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, in East Perth, West Perth, North Perth and the city of Perth. I did not select Chipper's Terrace because of appearances. I examined the rate books of the municipality and from instances where the annual value seemed to be very large in proportion to the capital value, I selected the properties to be investigated. The property I refer to was shown in the rate book as comprising four houses facing Hay-street. The annual value was given as £30 and the capital value as £390. Seven houses were shown as having a capital value of £220 and an annual value of £24. Regarding the annual values, the municipality, in fixing the rates, ascertained what rent premises will return or what would be a fair rent if such premises were let. The municipal authorities deduct 40 per cent. from the rent and take the balance as the annual value.

The Minister for Works: They take 40 per cent.!

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, the local authorities are allowed to deduct rates and taxes with an additional 20 per cent. In order to simplify matters, they deduct 40 per cent. straight out. To ascertain the capital value the annual value is multiplied by two-thirds. Let me show how it works out. Say the annual value on premises, valued at £220, is set out as £24. If we add two-thirds of £24, or £16, it gives £40 per annum as the rent. The tenants assured me they were paying 15s per week or £39 per annum. So it will be seen that the annual value agrees with the rent actually paid. I made an inspection of the seven houses rented at 15s. per week. They are all joined. Moreover, being built off the street, they are surrounded on four sides by back yards. Each house has a frontage of 15 feet, with two rooms of 10 feet by 10 feet and a kitchen. They have no copper, no troughs, no electric light.

Mr. McCallum: Have they a bath?

Mr. HUGHES: There is a bath in a little lean-to, but there is no verandah, and so when it rains the passages are flooded for about 10 feet along. Consequently, the tenant cannot have carpet or linoleum within 10ft. of the front door.

The Minister for Works: How does the rain get into the house when the door is closed?

Mr. HUGHES: The door does not fit like a glove, and so the rain beats in under it and flows along the passage.

The Colonial Secretary: Since you say the premises are so closely hemmed in, it suggests a fair wind velocity.

Mr. HUGHES: I hope the Colonial Secretary will be one of the slumming party.

The Colonial Secretary: I shall be very pleased.

Mr. HUGHES: The back yards measure 20ft. by 13ft. In wet weather each is simply one pool of slush, and in summer time the stench given off is abominable. When I was there the day before yesterday, quite a lot of rubbish was strewn about. One tenant, a lady, was told by her doctor that her illness was due to the surroundings in which she was living. He advised her to get another house. The four houses in front are rated at £52 per annum. Water rates and municipal rates amount to, approximately, 25 per cent. of the annual value. The capital value of the premises is shown at £390 each. The rent of £52 per annum, less rates and taxes, gives 11 per cent. on the money invested. Hon. members may think that is not out of the way. But 20 years ago those four houses were shown in the rate book at a capital value of £150 each. To-day they are shown at £390, notwithstanding that there has been no alteration to the premises.

The Minister for Works: How do you account for that?

Mr. HUGHES: I will account for it. It is reasonable to assume that, in 1903, the city council did not fix the capital value at less than the actual cost of the building.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: At what did they fix the annual value?

Mr. HUGHES: At £17. If this man invested £150 in the premises in 1903, and is getting £44 per annum clear return to-day; he is receiving 30 per cent. interest on his money.

The Minister for Works: Does he get that rent every week in every year?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Then it is more than I have been able to do.

Mr. HUGHES: There are landlords who treat their tenants generously. I have provided that they shall not come under the Bill, for they are not the landlords we are after. In this instance the landlord is actually receiving 30 per cent. per annum for his money. In 1911 the annual value of the premises was shown at £17, as against £30 in 1923. In other words, there has been an increase of 77 per cent. in the rental. If in 1911 a rental of £28 gave the owner a fair return on his money, what must he be getting now, when the rent has increased to £50?

The Minister for Works: Rates have gone up.

Mr. HUGHES: But not to anything like the same extent. The seven houses behind these four are rented at 15s. per week each, or £39 per annum. Deduct 15 per cent. for rates and taxes, and there is a clear annual return of £33 for the landlord.

Mr. Teesdale: Are these houses of brick?



Mr. HUGHES: Yes. And that on a building with a capital value of £220. I was not able to ascertain the cost of the premises. But if the capital value of brick premises to-day is £220, and those premises have existed for 10 or 12 years, it is clear that they cost considerably less than that to construct. This man is getting 15 per cent. on the present valuation, so I will leave it to hon. members to conjecture what he is getting on the actual money invested. In 1911 the annual value of those houses was shown at £12, or a rental of £20. That is to say, they were bringing in 8s. per week in 1911, and are bringing in 13s. to-day, an increase in rent of 77½ per cent. Compare this with the increase in wages. In 1911 the minimum wage was 9s.; to-day it is 13s. 4d. or an increase of 48 per cent. While wages have gone up 48 per cent., the rental of these houses has gone of 87 per cent., or nearly double the increase in wages.

The Minister for Works: Can it not be shown that this class of property should not be in the city, should be outside the city boundaries?

Mr. HUGHES: An inspection of the premises would show that they should not be inhabited, that they should be demolished. But while people do live in them, Parliament would be justified in seeing to it that the tenants are not unduly exploited by the landlord. Let us make comparison with a house in the vicinity valued at £1,325, the rental of which is £78. If a landlord can let a property worth £1,325 for an annual rental of £78, and it affords him adequate return for his money, there must be a very wide margin for the owner of premises valued at £200 and let for £24 per annum.

The Minister for Works: Perhaps he could not afford to do it. It may be the only rent he could get.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister surely does not think there is any difficulty in getting tenants at high rents to-day?

The Minister for Works: Not to-day, but there has been during the last few years.

Mr. HUGHES: In 1911 I came from the goldfields to Perth and my people decided to follow me. I searched Perth for a house and eventually got one in Adelaide-terrace for 17s. 6d. a week. In order to obtain possession of the key, I had to pay a week's rent in advance.

The Premier: A fashionable quarter for 17s. 6d. a week.

Mr. Teesdale: They could not have liked your looks.

Mr. HUGHES: But the people of East Perth must have appreciated something about me when they returned me to represent them.

The Premier: They do make mistakes, you know.

Mr. HUGHES: And that despite the wish of the Premier in those well-known words that he hoped my opponent would win.

The Premier: I did, too.

Mr. HUGHES: East Perth had the choice between me and the Premier's selection, and chose the lesser of two evils.

The Premier: And they have been sorry ever since.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

The Premier: We are discussing the prices of things.

Mr. HUGHES: If the landlord with the £1,300 property assessed his premises at the same rate as the £300 property was assessed, he would be receiving £144 a year. We can assume that the former landlord is getting a reasonable return.

The Minister for Works: We cannot.

Mr. HUGHES: In 1911 houses were so scarce that one had to pay a week's rent in advance to get possession of the key. Since then there has not been any indication of a shortage of houses in Perth.

The Colonial Secretary: Yes, there has.

Mr. HUGHES: I mean there has not been a surplus of houses; houses have been at a premium. The house for which I paid 17s. 6d. in 1911 is now bringing 27s. 6d. a week.

The Minister for Works: I am not as lucky as that, I assure you.

Mr. HUGHES: There are landlords that are charging a fair thing, and, in justice to them, we should curb the avaricious ones. If the Minister gives it out that he has property and is getting a very small rental for it, he will be besieged in his office by applicants for tenancies.

The Minister for Works: I would not turn out the tenants I have.

Mr. HUGHES: Perhaps they have been good ones.

*[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]*

The Minister for Works: Presently I shall tell you something that will astonish you.

Mr. HUGHES: This is not a Bill to control the rents levied by the Minister for Works; it is a Bill to control all rents. In Royal-street, East Perth, houses valued at £350 are bringing in 13s. a week. Deducting the rates and taxes, they are showing a return of 11 per cent., but that is on the present day value of the premises. If we ascertained the cost of building those premises, we should probably find that the return was between 25 per cent. and 30 per cent. Landlords have no regard for the welfare of tenants. No conveniences are provided in some houses. The Royal-street houses have neither coppers nor troughs; they consist of three rooms and a kitchen on a 15ft. frontage.

Mr. Teesdale: Have they a bath?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. The residents inform me that two years ago these places were bringing 11s. a week, but a new agent had electric light installed and some calcimining done, and in the following week he raised the rents by 6s. 6d. a week. Quite close to the city are some very dilapidated cottages. I did not need to open the gates,

because years ago the gates had fallen down and had not been replaced. Portions of the fences had fallen down, and the appearance of the houses clearly indicated that they had not been in contact with a paint brush for at least ten or 15 years. They consist of two rooms and a kitchen, small rooms, and no passage, no coppers or troughs or electric light. For these miserable hovels the tenants are paying 12s. 6d. a week. At the rear of these two premises is another place divided into two houses, each consisting of two rooms and a kitchen. They, too, are entirely surrounded by backyards. One was occupied by a man, his wife, and two children. To assist to pay the rent they had let to an old lady a little lean-to, enclosed with bags. One naturally asks why people live under such abominable conditions. I asked the man, and he told me the old story. He was a miner who had strained the muscles of his heart and had a touch of tuberculosis, and could not earn for himself; he was a pensioner. His wife sustained the two children by working as a charwoman in the Lands Department, for which she received 37s. 6d. a week. They had £2 12s. 6d., out of which they had to pay 12s. 6d. rent, which left them £2 a week on which to keep the family of four, the children being aged 13 years and nine years. I asked why they did not leave the city and live in better surroundings, and the reply was that if they did, it would cost at least 1s. per day in fares for the wife to get to and from her employment. The excessive rates charged on the railways are forcing people to live in the city. Unfortunate people who, through no fault of their own, have been failures in life are obliged to live under those wretched conditions, and the landlords are not slow to take advantage of their position; they impose rentals that return as much as 30 per cent. I could mention places in Edward-street, in Brisbane-street, in West Perth, and in fact all over Perth in respect of which similar extortionate rents are being exacted, but I think sufficient has been said to convince members of the need for legislation. If members will make a party, I will undertake to confront them with more proof than I can possibly detail here.

The Premier: When will you receive the names of those willing to make the trip?

Mr. HUGHES: I hope the Premier will be one of the party.

The Premier: I hope so.

Mr. HUGHES: I know the Premier is not very sympathetic towards any proposal to control rents; he has definitely said he will not interfere with rents. I know he is out of sympathy with the metropolitan area and will do nothing for it.

The Premier: You are quite wrong there.

Mr. HUGHES: The metropolitan area will get no measure of justice from him.

The Premier: I have done more things than you have ever spoken about.

Mr. HUGHES: And the people of the metropolitan area are beginning to realise

that they will get no measure of justice from him.

The Premier: You merely talk, and do nothing.

Mr. HUGHES: I am not in a position to do anything. The Premier is in a position to do something and yet he does nothing. He is decidedly hostile to the metropolitan area—

The Premier: That is absolutely untrue.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: Camouflage it as he may, the people are beginning to realise exactly where he stands.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member must stick to the Bill.

The Premier: Stick to the Bill. There is a lot in it—rubbish, too.

Mr. A. Thomson: If this Bill be passed, it will be a wonderful inducement for people to build houses for letting purposes!

Mr. HUGHES: If extortionate rents are being charged for houses in outlying districts, they are nothing to the rents being charged in the city. I examined some city property that was recently disposed of for £32,000.

Mr. Pickering: What did it cost?

Mr. HUGHES: Nothing like that.

The Colonial Secretary: Was it a fair price, or was it a special bargain?

Mr. HUGHES: Is the Minister trying to be humorous?

The Colonial Secretary: Was it a fair price?

Mr. HUGHES: If the Minister would only explain his jokes beforehand, I might be able to see the point of them.

The Colonial Secretary: It would be more appropriate to mention the cost.

Mr. HUGHES: One of the first things the new landlord did was to give notice to a tenant paying £15 a week, plus rates and taxes, that in future his rent would be £25 a week, plus rates and taxes. In order to make his business pay, the tenant had to dispense with the services of some or his staff. Three or four hands were thrown out of employment, simply because the landlord wanted another pound of flesh. The price paid for the premises was £32,000, and the municipality assessed the value of the premises occupied by the tenant in question at £8,850.

The Colonial Secretary: Could the tenant expect to make more money with a smaller staff?

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister knows how to make money with a small staff.

The Colonial Secretary: To reduce hands seems an illogical proceeding on his part.

Mr. HUGHES: The Minister, as a business man, knows that when he wants to increase his profit or meet increased charges, the first thing he does is to reduce the staff and endeavour to compel those remaining to work harder. That is the philosophy of the Minister, the people for whom he stands, and his associates in business.

The Colonial Secretary: Increased turnover is the gospel.

Mr. HUGHES: If there is any increase in the cost of their premises, their policy is to get down on the bottom dog, and try to sweat others into doing the same amount of work that was being done before. A rental of £25 a week on a property worth £3,850 gives the landlord a clear return of 12½ per cent.

Mr. Pickering: But he paid £32,000 for it.

Mr. HUGHES: One of his tenants, whose rental he raised from £15 to £25 a week, is occupying portion of the building that is worth £3,850. His 12½ per cent. interest is clear profit. That is an improper return upon the capital.

Mr. Pickering: How much is allowed for maintenance?

Mr. HUGHES: The rates and taxes and maintenance are paid by the tenant. The £25 a week was net rental.

Mr. Teesdale: Is he the only tenant?

Mr. HUGHES: There are several other tenants in the building. The rent roll, according to the figures of the Municipal Council, is £4,412 per annum. The tenants pay all rates and taxes, and there is a clear return to the landlord of 12½ per cent. It may be said we have no right to prevent the investor from getting as great a return as possible from his outlay. The absence of any check on the rents enables him to do this. The war is over and the surplus money cannot be invested in war loans, and the general public cannot be fleeced in the matter of interest. The returns from the money derived from the interest on war loans is now available for investment.

Mr. A. Thomson: The authorities had to go to London for the last loan.

Mr. HUGHES: This money has been made out of the war, out of boots, as in this case, that were sold to the wives and children of soldiers, and the money is now being capitalised in bricks and mortar. This £32,000 represents money derived from footwear which should have been given to the people. It was necessary to invest it. Knowing well there would be no restrictions on the rental he could charge, and that there was a shortage of shop accommodation in Perth, and possibly a further shortage owing to the possibility of the municipality cutting a new street through to St. George's-terrace, this man invested his money in this building and charged rents that gave him a net return of 12½ per cent. If we had a fair rents Act this man could not have charged more than a certain figure. Exorbitant prices would not be given for properties. We have heard of mining ramps, agricultural ramps and others.

Mr. Pickering: Why agricultural ramps?

Mr. HUGHES: Why not architectural ramps?

Mr. Pickering: What about accountancy ramps?

Mr. HUGHES: I daresay some accountants are responsible for ramps. Because there are no restrictions on the rents that can be charged, money is being invested in bricks and mortar. In order to effect a sale, people put up the rents on their tenants out of all

proportion to the value received. They then produce their rent roll to the probable purchaser, who thus gives more for the premises than would otherwise be regarded as a safe investment. I am told by people who are supposed to understand economics that the position will adjust itself, and that in due time the provision of the accommodation necessary will force rents down. That has not been the case in any city in the world. Because there are no restrictions on the rents that may be charged, people are extracting a higher rental from their tenants. In a couple of decades no doubt the Barrack-street property I refer to will be sold for £50,000.

Mr. Munsie: The consumer has to pay, whatever the rent is.

Mr. HUGHES: Here is an illustration of how people can be bled. A man owned premises which cost him £380. He was getting £1 a week rental. It was a little four-roomed house, the front room of which was turned into a shop. He then had a brain wave. He converted another room into a second shop and spent £150 on the alterations. He then charged 25s. a week for the new shop, and in order to bring the two shops into line charged his old tenant the same weekly figure. He has increased his rents by 30s. a week, and in two years will have returned to him £156, a sum slightly in excess of his outlay on the additions. This represents a charge of 50 per cent. per annum on the £150 expenditure, which is equal to a return of 18 per cent. per annum on the £530 invested. In the case of workers' homes, a man owns the property in 30 years' time. On a capital expenditure of £550 the State charges him 13s. 9d. a week, and every year he pays one-thirtieth of the total amount. The rate charged for workers' homes is 2s. 6d. per week per £100. Five and a half half-crowns amount to 13s. 9d. a week.

The Premier: You are wrong.

Mr. HUGHES: I hope the Minister for Works will see that the Premier takes the course he suggested in the case of Connolly. I suggest that instead of whale catching and shooting the Premier should devote a little time to study. A worker's home costs £550 and is acquired by the tenant on the payment of 13s. 9d. a week.

The Premier: He does not purchase the home out of the 13s. 9d.

Mr. HUGHES: Although the Premier is administering the Workers' Homes Department, he flatly contradicts my statement. I hope the Premier will go to that office tomorrow, look up the rents charged, and admit before the House he is wrong.

The Premier: I must apologise to the hon. member.

Mr. HUGHES: An apology is unnecessary, but I hope he will be more careful in future about reckless statements of that kind. The Premier should not question my figures.

The Premier: I do not question your figures but your accuracy.

Mr. HUGHES: That is characteristic of the Premier. When we told him the increased taxation would bring in an additional £64,000

per annum, he said, "You are wrong." When the figures were analysed it was found that the increase represented exactly £64,000.

[*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*]

The Minister for Works: How did you know that?

The Premier: He did not know it.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course I merely guessed it, but my guess was right. Notwithstanding the Premier's denial, this business of government by optimism, and this substitution of optimism for common sense in the Leader of the Government is getting on my nerves.

The Premier: You have neither nerves nor common sense.

Mr. HUGHES: If he keeps on repeating his statements he will convince even himself. All, however, is not well with the landlords and tenants. If 13s. 9d. a week will pay the interest on a worker's home and one-thirtieth of the capital per annum, what justification is there for a landlord getting a rental of 50s. per week on an outlay of practically the same amount? I know whom our friends opposite are likely to support. Unfortunately, some of the people do not realise it so clearly as I do.

Mr. Teesdale: You know nothing about what we are likely to do.

Mr. HUGHES: I am quite prepared to leave the question till next March.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must keep to the Bill before the House.

Mr. HUGHES: Here is a man with a margin of 36s. per week between the rent he charges and the rent for which the Government can give a much superior house together with one-thirtieth of the equity. When we find such extortionate charges, representing 50 per cent. per annum on the investment, surely we must recognise that the time has arrived for legislation to supervene. We will not addow a money-lender to charge more than 12½ per cent. per annum. He is prohibited by law from charging more than that rate. Yet in respect of premises in connection with which he gets the advantage of the unearned increment, the landlord is receiving 18 per cent. additional. If we will not allow a man to lend money for investment in business, where there is greater probability of loss, at more than 12½ per cent., it is absolutely illogical to allow a man who has invested in the gilt-edged security of house property to charge anything he likes simply because for the time being there is a shortage of houses.

Mr. Latham: Surely you do not suggest that this Bill of yours will overcome that shortage?

Mr. HUGHES: If the wisdom of the hon. member were attached to the Bill, that might solve the problem. As to the necessity for legislation to control rents, I do not think there can be any answer to the figures I have quoted. In my opinion, every reasonable man realises that some control should be imposed on the voracious landlord. The principle of the Bill is that a rate per cent. not exceeding

eight shall be charged by the landlord. I desire to fix as a maximum a rent which after deduction of rates and taxes will give the landlord a return of eight per cent. on the capital value of his investment. I think members will agree with me that eight per cent., subject to those allowances, represents a very fair return.

Mrs. Cowan: What about repairs?

Mr. HUGHES: The Bill provides for repairs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That is a matter for discussion in Committee.

Mr. HUGHES: Many people claim that the bank rate fixes the money rate. But what really fixes the bank rate is the interest that can be got on money invested in real estate. The banks lend most of their money on first-class security, real estate. If the banks can obtain ten per cent. on real property, the tendency is to raise the bank rate. But if it is not possible to obtain more than six per cent. from real estate investments, the rate for overdrafts decreases correspondingly. The banks earn no interest on their money until they place it out for the use of some other person. If that person can obtain as much as 12 per cent. from investment in real estate, the banks have a ready avenue for the investment of their funds. As a result, there is a tendency to make money scarce and the bank rate high. I believe that by controlling the rents on real property we shall do something to bring down the bank rate and thus naturally cheapen money for investment. Real estate is universally recognised as a first-class security. Under the Trustee Act a trustee is permitted to invest in real estate in Western Australia, because it is considered that the chance of failure is extremely slight. Money invested in real estate here is considered almost as safe as money in the bank. If people, without any risk, can obtain eight per cent., or two per cent. above the bank rate, the margin must be considered a wide one. The only feature of the Bill which I do not like is that I have fixed the rate too high.

Mr. Pickering: Why not amend the Bill in that respect?

Mr. HUGHES: I will leave that to the member interjecting, who has recently enunciated some very "red" tendencies. There must be some basis for arriving at the capital value, and I propose to do that by the only reasonable method—taking the unimproved value of the land plus the actual cost of the buildings and improvements, and adding to that total any money legitimately spent in repairs, and deducting two per cent. per annum depreciation on buildings of brick, stone, or similar materials, and 2½ per cent. in the case of wooden buildings. If a man has invested £100 and is therefrom deriving a return of £30 per annum, one cannot say that that is reasonable.

The Premier: I think it is quite enough; in fact, rather too much.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, and that is why it is necessary for me to do by this Bill what

the Government ought to have done, but have not done owing to the Premier's hostility to the metropolitan area.

The Premier: You are not telling the truth.

Mr. HUGHES: I am telling the truth. The Premier has no monopoly of the truth. For the present, the Bill allows the landlord the benefit of the unearned increment of the land; but I venture to say that in the course of 10 or 20 years he will not get that, because the people will be forced to revise their laws so as to secure the benefit of the unearned increment for the State. It is necessary to provide machinery whereby an appeal can be made from the landlord's assessment of the rent. The Bill lays down that a tenant who is not satisfied with the rent being charged, who considers that the landlord has exceeded what this measure allows, shall have the right of appeal to a police magistrate, who will fix the rent just as the police court now fixes the rate of interest in a disputed money-lending transaction. The magistrate's decision, once given, is to hold good until by reason of additional expenditure on the property, or fresh improvements, or for any other legitimate cause, the landlord is entitled to obtain another award. A difficulty in connection with this Bill arises where the premises are not wholly occupied by one tenant, but are let to a number of separate, individual tenants. In that case the Bill provides that the total rent collected from all the tenants shall not exceed what is prescribed by the measure, shall be apportioned between the tenants in accordance with the principles of the Bill. If any particular tenant is not satisfied with the percentage of rent apportioned to him, he has the right of appeal to a police magistrate just the same as a tenant who occupies the whole of any premises. The Bill also provides, as far as possible, against manipulation of tenancies, against the landlord letting premises to one tenant, who in turn lets to another tenant, and so on. Only lodgers are outside the scope of the Bill. Where a tenant in bona fide occupation of premises sublets them to other people who are lodgers, those lodgers do not come within the provisions of the Bill. There is one case to which I desire to draw particular attention. The fact is notorious that people who own hotel property charge most excessive rents. They own nothing but the buildings. The law grants a license to some individual, who is obliged to carry on the business of a licensee and to accept all the responsibilities of the licensee. Because he happens to have got a license, the landlord of the premises to which the license applies charges a most excessive rent.

Mr. Pickering: The rent is sometimes fixed by tender.

Mr. HUGHES: There is a wonderfully clever remark. It does not alter the fact that the landlord fixes the rent.

Mr. Pickering: No. The tenderers fix the rent.

Mr. HUGHES: Does not the landlord accept the tender most suitable to him? Moreover, if he does not get a suitable tender, he accepts none. It is the landlord who is the final arbiter as to the rent to be paid. The landlord has no equity or property in the license, and no responsibility for compliance with the licensing law. The burden of that responsibility falls on the licensee, the tenant. Yet the landlord, under existing conditions, is enabled to exploit the tenant because of his being a licensee. The landlord who owns an hotel should not be allowed to exploit his tenant any more than should the landlord who owns any other class of premises. Hon. members must realise that the excessive rents charged for hotel premises put up the prices of liquors.

Mr. Latham: The State hotels are rent free, and yet they charge the same prices.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member knows full well that the tenant of a hotel has to reconp his rent. Therefore the higher the rent, the higher the prices of liquors. A universal reduction of hotel rents would mean a reduction in liquor prices.

Mr. Latham: The balance sheets of the State hotels do not show tremendous profits.

Mr. HUGHES: That fact does not affect my argument in the slightest degree. If all hotel rents were reduced, liquor prices would come down. I do not say that in advocacy of the Bill, or as something in its favour. I would say it was an added virtue of the Bill if its effect would be to abolish liquor trading. However, the rents charged to lessees of licensed premises are notoriously high. The time has arrived when it is necessary that legislation should be passed to deal with this problem. I have taken the opportunity to introduce a Bill because the Government have refused to provide the reform demanded by the metropolitan area. It was not my duty to do this, but the duty of the Government. The Premier failed to present the required legislation, and I have exercised my privileges as a private member in order to rectify the omission. I recognise that the subject is a difficult one to handle. Legislation has been enacted in other States and I believe a case has been made out in favour of the Bill. If further information is required, it can be obtained.

Mr. Teesdale: This legislation had an extraordinary effect in Sydney.

Mr. HUGHES: I hope the Bill will pass the second reading stage and that it will pass through both Houses. Anyone who chooses to inquire among the people in the metropolitan area will readily recognise the urgent necessity for the Bill. I move—

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

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.33 p.m.*