

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th September, 1910.

	PAGE
Paper presented	765
Questions : Mining Exemptions, Phillips River	765
Railways Annual Report, omission	765
Private Business, arrangement	765
Return : Railway, Coolgardie-Norseman	767
Bill : Health, Com.	767
Ministerial Statement : Resignation of the Premier	775

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Report of the Adelaide University Committee and University Extension Committee of West Australia. 2, Orders in Council under the Audit Act, 1904, Section 35. 3, Report of the Public Service Commissioner for year ended 30th June, 1910.

QUESTION—MINING EXEMPTIONS, PHILLIPS RIVER.

Mr. HUDSON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, For what period since the 1st January last have mineral leases Nos. 52 and 94, Phillips River district, been under exemption? 2, What are the dates of application and of granting exemptions on these leases since 30th June, 1910? 3, By whom were such exemptions granted? 4, Were the applications for any of such exemptions made in open court? 5, What were the grounds of such applications? 6, Has application been made for forfeiture of these leases? 7, If so, has such application been refused, and if so, on what grounds?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Lease No. 52—3 months and 7 days. Lease No. 94—2 months 21 days. 2, (1.) From 12-7-10 to 25-7-10 (14 days); date of advice and payment of fees, 19-7-10; (2) 26-7-10 to 8-8-10 (14 days); date of advice and payment of fees, 1-8-10; (3) 10-8-10 to 23-8-10 (14 days); date of application, 8-8-10; payment of fees, 9-8-10; (4) 25-8-10 to 31-8-10 (7 days); compulsory protection under Regulation 165; (5) 1-9-10 to 14-9-10 (14 days); date of application and pay-

ment of fees, 1-9-10. 3, Nos. 1 and 2 by the warden; No. 3 at head office; No. 4 by the warden under regulation 165; No. 5 at head office. 4, The warden's advice does not state whether the application was heard in open court or not. 5, The warden's advice merely notifies the granting of the exemption and does not state on what grounds. Exemptions granted at head office were to protect the property and machinery pending the completion of a sale by the bank as mortgagee. 6, Yes; on the 11th August. 7, Yes; the application was dismissed by the warden on the following grounds:— (1) Want of proof that the leases were not efficiently worked on the days complained of; (2) the leases were under exemption on the days complained of; (3) he was of opinion that the applicant for forfeiture was in collusion with the purchaser of these leases.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS ANNUAL REPORT, OMISSION.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is the reason the report of the chief officials under the Commissioner of Railways, usually presented to the House with the annual report on the working of the railways, is not included in that for the year ending 30th June, 1910? 2, Will the Minister cause such reports to be placed on the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The reasons are explained in paragraph 23, page 9 of the Commissioner of Railways' report for the year 1907-1908. Further, the report for 1909-1910 is in accordance with Clause 84 of "The Government Railways Act, 1904." 2, If the reports are desired by the House no objection will be raised.

PRIVATE BUSINESS, ARRANGEMENT.

Letter of Explanation.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Clerk Assistant a communication having reference to the discussion which took

place yesterday concerning the arrangement of private members' business on the Notice Paper. As I think members should be cognisant of the communication I will read it. It is as follows:—

In accordance with your instructions to explain the arrangement of private members' business on the Notice Paper, I have the honour to report as follows:—For a short time the Whips of the two parties arranged the order of business on private members' day, but the system was given up because their arrangement did not always please individual members who were interested. For several sessions past the Paper has been arranged by me in accordance with general instructions to maintain a strict chronological order. In maintaining this order many more complications arise than would at first sight appear likely, but an explanation could only be given at a length at present undesirable. It will be enough, perhaps, now to explain the reason why subjects, as it were, overtake and pass each other on the Notice Paper. With regard to notices of motion the only exception to the strict chronological order is in the case of formal motions for the introduction of Bills, for unopposed returns, and for leave of absence. Contrary I believe to the rules of all other Parliaments, a motion set down for and not reached on Tuesday takes precedence on Wednesday of a motion set down for Wednesday. The advantages of this system it is not my place to discuss, but it has continued in accordance with instructions renewed from time to time by successive Speakers for fifteen years. With regard to Orders of the Day, their position is regulated not by the date of the first introduction of the subject to the House, but by the date on which the House ordered them to be set down. Thus the consideration of the Workers' Compensation Bill in Committee takes precedence not from the 3rd August, when leave was given to introduce the Bill, but from the 24th August, when the House set it down for discussion in

Committee on the 31st. It will readily be seen that the adjourned debate on a motion may thus necessarily get in advance of a Bill introduced much earlier. The House at 5 o'clock orders the adjourned debate on a motion to be set down for the following day, and at 10 o'clock makes a similar order as to a fresh stage of a Bill. The prior order has prior place. Still more does the more recent motion get precedence when the Bill is set down for a later day. For example, the motion for leave to introduce the Marriage Act Amendment Bill was passed on Wednesday, 24th August, and its second reading was ordered by the House for consideration on Thursday, the 25th. The Workers' Compensation Bill, on the same day was ordered for Committee on Wednesday, 31st August. By our system, therefore, which, I must repeat, except from possible errors from inadvertence, has been followed in accordance with instructions for many years, the Marriage Act Amendment Bill has precedence.

Mr. HUDSON (Dundas): Do I take it, from the communication, that a private member getting a Bill passed through the first reading on private members' day can ask for the next stage to be put down for the following day, or must he have it held over until the following private members' day? If it is possible for a private member to bring it up on the Thursday it is easy for him to obtain precedence for a measure by specifically fixing a date instead of adopting what I believe to be the usual custom of having it set down for a private members' day. In the case of the Marriage Act Amendment Bill, it appears from the report of the Clerk Assistant that it was moved on a Wednesday and that the next stage was set down for the following day; whereas, in my case, that of the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill, I moved for the next stage to be taken on the following private members' day, thinking this was necessary as it was a private member's Bill. Apparently it is open for a member to move for the next stage of

such a Bill to be taken on the following day. It is difficult for one to ascertain whether such a measure is to be treated as a private or public Bill.

Mr. Scaddan: Will the Premier carry out his suggestion to refer the matter to the Standing Orders Committee?

The PREMIER (Sir Newton J. Moore): I was about to make a proposal to that effect. I move—

That this question be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, with the request that they make a definite recommendation with the object of dealing with the question.

Mr. WALKER (Kanowna): I would recommend that we should adopt the course taken in New South Wales with regard to private members' business.

Mr. Hudson: The Standing Orders Committee can take that into consideration.

Mr. WALKER: The course adopted in that State should be brought particularly under the notice of the committee for their guidance.

Mr. Hudson: It will be their duty to make inquiries.

Mr. WALKER: Under the New South Wales system the treatment of private members' business remains in the member's own hands.

Mr. BATH (Brown Hill): If the suggestion of the member for Kanowna were adopted we might make a recommendation that the New South Wales procedure be followed, and then there would be a chance of its being adopted here. If we have to wait for a report of the Standing Orders Committee, and then have to debate their recommendation, it might be that its consideration would never be reached this session, and there would be no finality.

Mr. JACOBY (Swan): I regret I was not in the House earlier so as to hear the suggestions made with regard to what procedure should be adopted. The system which was in force some time ago worked very satisfactorily, and should be adhered to now. Under that, notices were put on the Notice Paper in the order in which they were given in the House, that

is so far as private members' business was concerned. If a member desired to have a measure put up higher on the list than it was placed, and there was no objection, that was arranged by the two Whips. An alteration could only be made by a mutual agreement between the Whips. The rule was that Orders of the Day should appear in the order in which they were given in the House.

The PREMIER (in reply): I do not think the hon. member for Swan was in the Chamber when a very explicit statement from the Clerk Assitant was read by the Speaker with regard to the procedure adopted up to the present on this question. With the view of coming to some arrangement, it has been suggested that we should refer the matter to the Standing Orders Committee so that they might formulate some rule which will enable a proper procedure to be arrived at.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—RAILWAY, COOLGARDIE-NORSEMAN.

On motion by Mr. Harper, ordered: "That there be laid upon the Table of the House a return showing: 1, The total cost of construction of the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway. 2, The cost of maintenance and working expenses from 1st March to 31st August, 1910. 3, The revenue derived from passenger traffic. 4, The revenue derived from freight (other than firewood). 5, The revenue derived from freight on firewood for the same period."

BILL—HEALTH.

In Committee.

Resumed from 13th September; Mr. Daglish in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 7—Incorporation of Central Board:

Mr. HEITMANN moved an amendment—

That in line 1 all the words after "The" be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"general administration of this Act shall be under the control of a Minister of the Crown."

The object of the amendment was to alter the administration of the Bill. In the past the administration of health matters had not been all that was desired. The department had grown with the State, and in fact it had grown beyond the capacity of a board, particularly as it was constituted at the present time. Direct administration by a Minister would result in greater efficiency and we would have men in the department who had made a special study of health matters and who could give the whole of their time to the work. We would also do away to a great extent with the little differences which had cropped up in the past between the Central Board of Health and local bodies. It was well known from time to time that we heard of differences of opinion between the two bodies. From experience which had been gained, it was known that it was possible for a Government department to get more done in the shape of reform through local bodies than was the case by means of a more or less independent board. It would be possible to get local bodies to do many things which under the existing administration they would be inclined to dispute. After the experience of the other parts of Australia and New Zealand there was no doubt that efficient administration was not obtained by having a board in control. In 1904 there was a proposal submitted to do away with the present system of administration and a health department was suggested. A Bill was introduced but it did not pass. It was referred to a select committee and several medical gentlemen and a number of laymen who took an interest in sanitary and health matters by virtue of their professions gave evidence, and a greater portion of that evidence pointed to the desirability of the formation of a health department instead of the present system of administration. Among the witnesses who gave evidence was Dr. Blackburne who was well known and who took a good deal of interest in these matters, and Dr. Black who was recognised as a sanitarian well in advance of many others. The latter stated that he believed that by more direct administration

better work could be done. A good deal of the inability of the central board to force the carrying out of the regulations by local bodies he declared would be done away with. He (Mr. Heitmann) would be prepared to give the governing body, whether the Central Board of Health or a department, any amount of power, and on the subject of the power of the authorities there were clauses in the Bill which he would endeavour to broaden. For instance, greater power should be given to the board or the department in the framing of regulations and in the bringing about of their uniformity. In answer to an interjection the Minister desired to know what we wanted and he asked whether it was desired that there should be an under-secretary, and further indicated that it would be undesirable to have a Minister in control because he would not be acquainted with the subjects which would come before him. The last argument was not much at all because in all our departments there were gentlemen who occupied the positions of Ministers who very often knew practically nothing about the work which was conducted there. At the same time it was well known that they made good Ministers. A Minister showing that degree of interest which was necessary in health matters could make a great success of the health department. If an under-secretary were appointed he would not be going any further than the present system of administration. There was a clerk in charge of the clerical work who acted as secretary to the board and also to the official head, and the same thing would apply if it was a Minister who was in charge of the department. There was no reason why there should not be an under-secretary for this department because there was no department carrying with it greater responsibility and greater interest as far as the public were concerned. There was a proposal in the Bill to appoint an advisory board. With Ministerial control an advisory board could act in the same capacity; it could advise the Minister or he could seek their advice on matters about which he had any doubt. In other parts of Australia

and in New Zealand the departmental system existed. In New Zealand it could not be denied that since they had done away with administration by a board there had been a vast improvement with regard to health matters. In Queensland there was departmental control through a commissioner and the same thing applied more or less to New South Wales, where they had an advisory board it was true, with only advisory powers. In Tasmania, although the health department was not of great dimensions there was direct Ministerial control. If in this State a department were created it would be necessary for the Government to give it both moral and financial support and particularly financial support because whether it were departmental control or control by a board not much advance would be made unless the Government were prepared to supply the necessary financial assistance. With a department which had a staff of up-to-date scientific men much better results would be obtained than had been the case in the past under the existing system of administration.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It was to be assumed the amendment was more in the nature of a suggestion that the House should give an indication of what it desired should be done. If the amendment were carried it would be necessary to recast the Bill in order to provide for a chief medical officer or commissioner. The hon. member desired that the administration of the Department of Health should be placed wholly under Ministerial control, with, of course, expert officers to advise the Minister. This system, it was suggested in the amendment, should displace that of a Central Board of Health. It was well to make it clear that this constituted the distinct issue before the House. The Government could not accept the amendment, because they did not believe it would furnish administration as good as would be secured under the system of a central board. Perhaps it was not necessary to again point out that in addition to the powers given under the Bill to the local boards—

Mr. Bolton: No powers whatever are given to the local boards.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Over and above the powers given to the local boards there was the special right of appeal to the Minister. That political power was necessary in the administration of an Act extending over the whole of Western Australia, and which was so intermixed with our daily life that there must of necessity be occasions calling for the exercise of political authority. Absolute power was placed in the hands of the Minister, who could intervene and take to himself all the authority of the central board.

Mr. Walker: Only on certain occasions, under certain circumstances.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No, whenever he chose.

Mr. Walker: Which clause are you relying on?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Reference to Clause 44 would disclose the extended powers given to the Minister. Such provision was necessary. In the first place the power would be in the hands of an expert board, who would, at the same time, have all the responsibility; then when the Minister interfered the responsibility would pass to him. Hon. members would admit the necessity for having a local authority in each district or municipality for the purpose of attending to certain health matters.

Mr. Heitmann: It is not necessary to have as many as we have around Perth.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That was a matter of administration, and made no difference so far as the Bill was concerned. Was there any member who would like to give the whole power to, say, the mayor of a municipality? Surely this would be unwise in the extreme; yet some hon. members desired to get rid of the central board and place the full control in the hands of one person.

Member: No.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The amendment asked that the general administration of the measure should be under the control of a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Bolton: The same as the Mines Department; you have no central board for that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Surely the two departments could not be compared. There was a real necessity for a board of experts in connection with the administration of health affairs. The responsibility would have to be placed somewhere, and probably not even the member for Cne would contend that the whole of such responsibility should be placed on the shoulders of the Minister.

Mr. Heitmann: I would give him just as much responsibility as we give you now.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But the hon. member suggested the appointment of a chief medical officer or commissioner.

Mr. Underwood: A department of health.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It followed that if the amendment were carried the Bill would have to make provision for an officer who would accept the general responsibility for the administration of the measure.

Mr. Taylor: That would not be a difficult task.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Perhaps not. But seeing the importance of the measure members ought to pause and consider whether it would not be wiser to have the control placed in the hands of a board of five persons among whom would be representatives of the local authorities. The member for Mount Margaret, when in office, had brought down a measure under which it was proposed there should be a commissioner or principal medical officer who would be responsible for the administration.

Mr. Taylor: I intended he should be responsible to the Minister, and the Minister responsible to Parliament. There was to be no irresponsible body.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Minister was responsible to Parliament under any circumstances. The Bill brought forward by the hon. member had provided that, "The Government shall appoint a medical practitioner to be chief medical officer of health who, under the

Minister, shall be responsible for the general administration of the department."

Mr. Walker: Who drafted that Bill?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No matter who had drafted the Bill it was well known that when in office the member for Mount Margaret went carefully through each measure placed in his hands, and was ever content to take the responsibility of anything he brought before the House. It would be most unwise to throw the whole responsibility of the administration of this measure into the hands of one person. It would be far better to have a board composed in the manner prescribed in the Bill. Indeed, it would be difficult to find any one person possessed of all the necessary knowledge for the purpose of administering so far-reaching a measure. If such an officer proved arbitrary or dictatorial he would not be able to work harmoniously with the local authorities.

Mr. Bolton: Has not that been the case in the past?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Under the Bill it was proposed that the Principal Medical Officer should be the chairman of the board. In addition to the chairman there would be a bacteriologist and an architectural engineer well versed in all matters pertaining to sewerage and sanitation. Further than that, it was proposed to give the local authorities the right to nominate representatives on the board. This would serve to bring the board into close touch with the local authorities, thus obviating possibilities of friction. With a board composed in this manner better administration would be secured than by having a single responsible officer. In a large State like Western Australia, with such varied interests, the administrator of the Act must depend on reports received from different officers, and administration was not likely to be as good with one person in control as it would be with a board. The conditions were different in New Zealand with its large population and small area. There it was easier to control health matters than would be possible in Western Australia. In New Zealand very little work was done by the local authorities, their func-

tions being confined merely to scavenging and street cleaning. The central administration in this State might undertake the whole of the sanitary work of the metropolitan area, but it was a different proposition to deal with the whole of the townships throughout the State. It was peculiar that increase of central control led to a lessening of the functions of local authorities. This was not a wise thing to do. In New Zealand the scope of the work of the local authorities in health matters was to a great extent destroyed. In South Australia the Minister had no special powers, his only function in health administration being connected with the election of the central board. After the appointment of the central board the Minister in South Australia ceased to exercise control, the board having absolute power. There was not even the power on the part of the Minister, such as there was given under this Bill to the Minister in Western Australia, to supersede the board and possess all the powers of the board. In New South Wales the Minister had no statutory functions in regard to health matters, the board being in charge of the administration of the Act; and if the Minister desired to instruct the board to do anything, it was necessary for him to get Executive-Council approval before the order or direction had any force on the board. In South Australia and New South Wales more power was given to the central board and less political power was evident than was the case in Western Australia. In Victoria the ministerial power was somewhat similar to that provided in the Bill before members. In Queensland the system was somewhat on the lines of the Bill introduced a few sessions ago by the member for Mount Margaret. A commissioner under the Minister was charged with the administration of the Act, but the whole of the functions were to a great extent ministerial. We might well follow the system adopted in South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria, though it was proposed in the Bill to give the Minister greater powers than were conferred by the Acts of South

Australia or New South Wales. Not only had we to consider our great extent of country, but the great scope of the measure must be considered. New things were dealt with, and greater powers were given in health matters; and if a Minister was to be placed absolutely in charge of the department, it would not be an enviable position for any Minister who wished to take matters entirely under his own control and do as he thought fit. A Minister would need to accept the advice of his responsible officers; even those who urged ministerial control would hold the Principal Medical Officer responsible for the administration of the law; but it would not be fair to put responsibility on this officer unless it was understood that the Minister, and not the officer, accepted responsibility for any instructions issued by the Minister contrary to the advice of the officer. The Bill was too important to be subservient to party or political considerations; it dealt with so many important things. Of course it was possible a man with universal knowledge sufficient for all purposes might be obtained, but there was more chance of getting better administration by having a board as suggested in the Bill. Regulations would have to be drafted for the registration of nurses and midwives, and the Bill provided for a special board to do this; but if those who asked that the Minister should be made responsible for the administration of the measure would agree to the provision of a board for making these regulations, where would the responsibility be? If the board were to make the regulations, who was to take the responsibility? It was understood members opposite strongly favoured the idea of a board for making these regulations.

Mr. Taylor: Yes; a board of experts dealing with their own profession.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But who was to take responsibility for the measure?

Mr. Heitmann: The Minister can disallow any regulation they make.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Where the measure provided that a board should make the regulations, did it come within

the province of the Minister to say that he would not accept them?

Mr. Taylor: The Minister does not always accept the advice of boards.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Undoubtedly that was the case; but surely the Principal Medical Officer with his ability and knowledge should be able to recommend to the Executive Council what regulations should be prescribed for registering nurses? At the same time the amendment desired by members in this regard could be agreed to. There were other duties of a multifarious type imposed by the measure. There were clauses dealing with sewerage and drains and the pollution of rivers, and regulations must be framed to deal with these matters; also regulations would need to be framed dealing with the demolition of houses.

Mr. Heitmann: What is to prevent the Minister making them?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But it was wiser to have a board with a general knowledge than to have the whole control in the hands of one man. Nuisances would need to be regulated, and in this regard the opinions of a bacteriologist and to a certain extent of an analyst would be needed. Regulations would be necessary to deal with infectious diseases, and the sale of foods and drugs. In the latter regard it was new legislation. How could it be contended that one man could give better service in the administration of a huge measure like this covering such varied matters?

Mr. Scaddan: Are you going to move that the clause be read a second time?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This was the chief clause of the measure, and it was necessary to fight for it, so there was no occasion for such an impertinent interjection. The clause contained the salient feature of the measure, and he was endeavouring, on behalf of his colleague, to influence members to accept the principle embodied in that clause. Later on in the Bill, when dealing with certain clauses which members might think gave too drastic powers to the board, he would not object to the insertion of the words "with the consent of the Minister."

Mr. TAYLOR: The main principle of the Bill was contained in the clause under discussion. Apparently the Minister had now greater confidence in the central board than he had some six years ago at the time the Public Health Bill was before the Assembly. That Bill, which was introduced by him (Mr. Taylor) was practically similar in detail, with the exception of the clauses referring to nursing, to the one now before us, but the principle was very different, inasmuch as under the Bill of 1904 it was proposed to create a department of public health with a chief medical officer in charge, who should be responsible to the Minister. That principle should be incorporated in the present Bill. The Minister considered it would be impossible for the measure to be administered as well and as wisely under one person as under a board of three or five persons. That was a mistake, for there could not be a better administration of health matters than under a chief medical officer, skilled in that particular work, and with a department of public health under his control. Such a department could deal with every question that arose without fear or favour, and without considering how any action they might desire to take would affect four or five members of the board, or their friends. It was because he thought the principle in the Bill of 1904 was the right one that he intended to support the amendment to make the Minister responsible to Parliament, and to the people, for the administration of the measure. Under that system the chief medical officer, as a scientifically trained person in public health, would be responsible to the Minister and would have under him a staff appointed by the Minister on his advice. Under the present Bill the Minister desired to have a board of experts, who would not be responsible to Parliament but only to the Government who appointed them. It was impossible to get a board of four or five men to control a large question like this so well as one man who was skilled in all matters of health, and would have full power, subject to the control of the Minister, to

direct the operations of his department. The Minister suggested that if there were a strong man at the head of the department complications might arise. If they did, that would be for the Minister to deal with. If the officer were incompetent he would not be retained in his position, and if the Minister were foolish enough to be led wrongly by his officer, then Parliament, to whom he would be responsible, would probably deal with him. The mere fact that this position might arise would ensure the Minister taking great care and caution in the administration of the department. Under the board, however, he might adopt a very haphazard and careless attitude, and on every question that arose would say that it had been decided by the Central Board of Health, who were responsible. That board would consist of representatives from the goldfields and country districts, and in all likelihood the Minister would look to the members representing those localities to support the action taken by the men who came from their respective districts. That was a bad principle to set up. It would be far better to have a health department on the same lines as the other large departments of the State. In the Mines Department the Minister was guided by his expert officers on technical questions, but on those questions which a layman could decide, it often happened that he vetoed the decisions of his experts. The Minister did not require a board to advise him how to administer the Mines Department, nor did the Treasurer require a board to tell him how to administer his department; they acted on the advice of their chief officers when they thought it wise to do so; so it should be in connection with health matters. In 1904, when speaking to the second reading of the Public Health Bill, the present Minister, who was then in Opposition, said—

For my part I think the Central Board of Health and the Principal Medical Officer did not carry out their duties in the past. I think greater powers should be given to them in the future In Clause 30 power is

given to the Minister to veto any appointments made by any health board. If the appointment of a medical officer or analyst, or inspector, does not suit the Minister he can veto the appointment; and such person cannot be appointed to the position without the approval of the Minister. That is a peculiar power to give to a Minister. I will point out directly where I think there ought to be alterations made in the administrative clauses. I would not feel inclined to grant that power.

At that time the present Minister thought the central board had not done their duty. After years of experience it had been proved that the best system of dealing with a matter such as this was by having it controlled by a Minister who was responsible to Parliament. He was with the Minister in the idea that the importance of the measure demanded that it should not be used for party purposes. He hoped his friends on the Opposition side of the House who did not believe in the principle he advocated, that there should be a department of health, controlled by a chief medical officer subject to the Minister, would support the clause as it stood and he also hoped that those sitting on the Ministerial side, who held the views propounded by him, would be given the same freedom to vote for the amendment. On public health matters we should not make it a party question. The Minister was justified in voting for the principle which he believed to be the better, just as other hon. members would be in voting according to their views, but if the proposed amendment was not carried, those who favoured control by a department would have the right to attack the system of a central board whenever it occurred in the clauses which might be under discussion, and attempt to minimise the powers of that body. What was really wanted was a man placed in charge who would be directly responsible to the Minister. Such a man should be skilled in health matters. An ordinary practitioner would not do. If such a man as he had described were appointed, he should be paid accordingly. In the mea-

sure which was introduced by him (Mr. Taylor) in 1904 provision was made for the payment of a salary in keeping with the position.

The Minister for Mines: You did not provide any salary in the Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR: That was left for Parliament.

The Attorney General: What would you propose to offer?

Mr. TAYLOR: That was for Parliament to decide. If hon. members read the Bill introduced in 1904 they would find that it was just as far-reaching as the present measure. Hon. members should agree to the amendment and should not deal with it from a party point of view, because it affected every person from the youngest to the oldest in every part of the State. The member for Cue moved the amendment without any feeling of party politics; he moved it on broad lines, believing the principle suggested to be absolutely the best in connection with the control of health matters.

Mr. OSBORN: In years gone by there was a considerable amount of friction between the Central Board of Health and the local authorities. The member for East Fremantle, speaking the other night, mentioned that two or three years ago when a conference met in Perth they passed a resolution in favour of doing away entirely with the Central Board of Health and substituting a system such as that advocated by the member for Cue. The fact should not be forgotten that just about that time there was considerable difficulty in getting the Act as it then stood administered by the local authorities. Plague had been rampant in the ports of the State and the local authorities absolutely neglected some of their duties, and it was found necessary that the Governor-in-Council should authorise the Central Board of Health to take a hand and compel the local authorities to carry out the duties imposed upon them by the Act then in force. At that time that action created some feeling between the local authorities and the Central Board of Health, a feeling which resulted in the resolution adopted by the conference to the effect that the Central Board

of Health should be abolished and that a public health department should be constituted. Time went on and the majority of the local authorities thought that the Central Board of Health or the Government of the day had some justification in the action they took in compelling the local authorities to carry out some of the conditions of the Health Act then existing. Last year the matter was again dealt with by the conference. On the agenda paper of that conference there was a motion set down to be moved by a representative from the goldfields confirming the resolution which had been passed by the conference in 1907. When the conference assembled, however, the representative who was to move that the previous resolution should be confirmed withdrew his motion, and the conference then gave an opinion that under the existing circumstances the Central Board of Health would be the proper authority to administer the Act.

Mr. Angwin: You must remember there were few there; all were out of town.

Mr. OSBORN disagreed with the hon. member. He (Mr. Osborn) was present.

Mr. Angwin: So was I.

Mr. OSBORN: When that motion came up for consideration or when it was supposed to come up for consideration at the beginning of the sittings, with the exception of a very few delegates indeed, all were present. It was after a couple of days had passed that the attendance was not very good. The member for Brown Hill when speaking on this clause the other evening had a good deal to say about it. On that occasion the hon. member had condemned the administration of the various local authorities. If that condemnation were justified it was strange that in almost the next breath the hon. member should have advocated the constituting of certain other boards. By way of contrast the hon. member had instanced the county councils of England. To his (Mr. Osborn's) way of thinking this illustration served to prove to what pitch of perfection administration could be brought when local authorities were composed of independent men. If the amendment were carried the

Health Department would grow to huge dimensions, and inspectors would have to be appointed in nearly every district or municipality, thus making the administration exceedingly costly. The local authorities would refuse to undertake the collection of rates for the work done, and the department would have to collect its own fees.

Mr. Heitmann: We have inspectors in every district to-day.

Mr. OSBORN: But under the existing system the inspectors had other duties to perform as well, and this enabled the local authorities to administer the affairs of health more economically than could otherwise be done. Under the amendment the local authorities would not undertake the work they were doing to-day, with the result that the department would have to appoint its own officers.

Mr. Scaddan: Why should the local authorities refuse to act?

Mr. OSBORN: Because under the amendment they would have no authority at all.

Mr. Scaddan: They would have just as much as they have to-day.

Mr. OSBORN: That was not so, because the commissioner or chief medical officer would have the direction of the whole of the affairs.

Mr. Heitmann: The central board has that to-day.

Mr. OSBORN: The central board exercised no authority unless it was absolutely necessary. The Bill had been framed to give the central board more authority than it had had in the past. As a matter of fact it had had no authority in the past. The Bill gave the central board the power which the commissioner would have in a department of health, but if the amendment were passed the administration of the measure would come immediately under the department and, in consequence, the local authorities would say, "Let the department carry out the work."

Mr. Taylor: Every local authority would be responsible for the health of its own area.

Mr. Bath: According to the terms of the Act.

Mr. OSBORN: If a department of public health were created it was certain the local authorities would not undertake the duties they were performing to-day. That was his opinion, and it was founded on good authority. Complaints had been made by the local boards of the attitude of the central board. It might be that some officers under the central board should be retired; but it was to be remembered that when the measure came into operation the board would be reconstructed and two of its members would be direct representatives of the local authorities.

Mr. Scaddan: Like Shirley White on the Fire Brigades Board.

Mr. OSBORN: If the administration of the Fire Brigades Act was to be taken as an indication of the result of the working of this measure under Ministerial control, members might save themselves the trouble of going farther with the discussion. Having regard to the importance of the Bill members ought not to split straws in respect to points of administration. Let them rather get the Bill through for the sake of its more important clauses. Whichever form of control might be resolved upon, the real administration would be left in the hands of the permanent officers.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Progress reported.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—RESIGNATION OF THE PREMIER.

The PREMIER (Sir Newton J. Moore): It is with feelings of very sincere regret and extreme personal disappointment that I have to announce to you, Mr. Speaker, to-night that I have decided to resign my position as Premier, and as leader of the House, more especially as I am doing it at a time when I was particularly anxious that the policy which my Ministers have initiated, and which is largely responsible for the improved position of the State, might have been followed up. It is only fair and reasonable that I should take members into my confidence. I have endeavoured as far as possible in my position as leader of my party to be on every possible occa-

sion open and above board to members of the House; because I realise that while I am leader of a particular party, at the same time I am leader of the House, and representative of all classes of the community. Some time after last session the question was discussed by myself and my colleagues as to whether I should take the position of Agent General, but I felt that it was a duty that I owed to the country and my party that I should continue in the position of Premier; and I proceeded to London with the idea of doing my duty as Premier there in bringing before the people in Great Britain the advantages we had to offer in Western Australia, and in endeavouring on all occasions earnestly to bring under the notice of all classes of the community the opportunity that Western Australia offered as a field for their investment and also as a field for emigration of a desirable class of people. When I returned here it was with the full intention of carrying on my position as leader of the House; and up to some two or three weeks ago nothing had occurred to prevent me carrying out that intention. I took the necessary steps to bring my family to Perth in order that I would be in closer touch with my office, and several other private arrangements were made by me, acting, as I was, under the impression that I could carry out the duties of my position with satisfaction to myself and with satisfaction to members generally. Some two or three weeks ago I felt I was not at all up to concert pitch. Work I was able to do a few months ago without any effort became irksome to me, and I took medical advice, with the result that two doctors have intimated to me that it is advisable in the interests of myself and my family that I should give up the position I have occupied as Premier. In writing to me one doctor said—

I have a disagreeable duty to perform, and after seeing you off this afternoon determined to get it off my chest as soon as possible. I am afraid that I have been allowing my friendship for you and my desire for your political advancement to prejudice me and be an excuse for shirking my duty

as your medical adviser. I cannot allow another week to go by without strongly advising you to immediately take such relaxation from your work as will tend to restore you to your former health. I do not wish to unduly alarm you, but from the thorough examination I gave you I cannot help giving my opinion that a continuance of the strain of your present political life will very soon have such an effect upon you that it will not be a matter of choice but of dire necessity that it must come to an end.

With the object of obtaining advice from a Perth professional man who was unacquainted with me I consulted a medical man the day before yesterday, and he advised me very much on the terms of the letter I have just read, stating that it was imperative I should give over the duties of my position. I was in hopes that this might have been got over by taking a rest for a month or two, but I feel that in the middle of a strenuous session of Parliament it is absolutely necessary that the leader should be at his post. Consequently I have come to the conclusion that it is necessary for me to relinquish this position. I need hardly say that it is with the greatest reluctance that I do so, but the medical men I have consulted have emphatically counselled me to resign from public office at the present time. I do not know that I need say anything more except that it was my ambition to see my party through, but I realise that my first duty is to those who are dependent upon me, and I have come to the conclusion that it is necessary for me to take the line I have already indicated. I can only say it is my present intention to retain my position as a private member, and I hope that as time goes on, after a brief respite, I may once again be able to take my place in a more prominent position than I will occupy for the next few months. In conclusion, I can only say that the Government of which I have had the honour to be head can take credit to themselves that they have been responsible for awakening the people of the State to some knowledge of its future possibilities, and

responsible for establishing confidence outside the State in the possibilities of Western Australia. To those who have been associated with me, I can say that I am grateful for the loyal support that has always been accorded to me. To members on both sides of the House I will take this, I suppose my last, opportunity of expressing my gratitude for the generosity and consideration which has been extended to me during the 4½ years I have been Premier of this State. It is with great reluctance, indeed, I have to make this announcement, but before sitting down, I would like personally to express to you, Mr. Speaker, my appreciation of the courtesy and consideration you have extended to me during the time I have had the honour of being leader of the House.

Mr. SCADDAN (Ivanhoe): Members of the Opposition, as well as those sitting on the Government side of the House, must receive with a great deal of sincere regret the announcement that the Premier proposes to resign from his position. We do not usually take the opportunity to say nice things about a person until such time as he retires from any position he holds; but on no occasion have members on this, the Opposition, side of the House lost the opportunity of expressing their appreciation of the manner in which the Premier has filled the position of leader of the House. He has always extended to members of the Opposition the same courtesy that he has given to his own supporters, and on that account we appreciate the manner in which the Premier has conducted the House. Moreover, we regret the fact that the Premier has to retire on account of ill-health. For some time we have recognised the strenuous manner in which he has applied himself to his duty as head of the Government; and though we recognised it had some effect on his health, we hoped that he might have recovered in order to continue in his position. Perhaps, after a short respite, he will fully recover and be able again to take up active duties, either as a private member or as a member of the Government, or again as leader of the House which he has led for the past few years. I feel I am voicing the views

of members of the Opposition when I say we have received with great regret the announcement of the Premier that he has to relinquish his position on account of ill-health, and we trust that he will soon recover.

The PREMIER: It will be necessary for me to take steps to place my resignation in the hands of His Excellency the Governor, and it will be necessary to give the gentleman, whoever His Excellency decides to send for to be leader of the incoming Government, some time in order to make the necessary arrangements. I would like, before resuming my seat, to say that I appreciate very much indeed the remarks of the leader of the Opposition. Although he has only been directly opposite me in the position of leader of the Opposition during the last week or two, I have always respected the hon. member as a man, and I much appreciate what he has given utterance to as voicing the views of his party generally. Naturally I can only say that I wish that my own party will continue to have public confidence, but I hope there will be an Opposition sufficiently strong to keep them alive. In order to allow the opportunity for the necessary readjustment of Ministerial portfolios to be made, I move (without notice)—

That the House at its rising do adjourn until Tuesday, 4th October.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 7.45 p.m.