

# Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 18th October, 1928.

	Page
Questions: Money Bills procedure ... ..	1301
Unemployed, sustenance, etc. ... ..	1301
State Finance, Public Salaries charges ... ..	1301
Surcharges ... ..	1301
Leave of absence ... ..	1302
Bills: Bunbury Electric Lighting Act Amendment, 3R. ... ..	1302
Railways discontinuance, returned ... ..	1302
Annual Estimates: Votes and items discussed ... ..	1302
Public Service Commissioner ... ..	1302
Government Motor Car Service ... ..	1302
Printing ... ..	1309
Tourist Bureau ... ..	1312
Literary and Scientific Grants ... ..	1313
Centenary Celebrations ... ..	1314
Treasury ... ..	1315
Audit ... ..	1315
Compassionate Allowances, Savings Bank ... ..	1321
Government Stores, Taxation, Workers' Homes, Miscellaneous Services ... ..	1321
State Accident Insurance Office ... ..	1323
Council of Industrial Development ... ..	1326
Forests ... ..	1329

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

## QUESTION—MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: On a question that may be said to concern the privileges of the House, I wish to ask whether anything has been done towards submitting to the Privy Council the question of the interpretation of the rights of the Legislative Council on money Bills, as agreed to in the 1927 session by both Houses of Parliament. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at the Votes and Proceedings of 1927, pages 171, 179 and 194, you will get all the information necessary.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am aware of the record in the Votes and Proceedings mentioned, and I may say that I myself have taken no action. I have not been informed that any action has been taken by the other branch of the legislature, and therefore I am unable to answer the hon. member further.

## QUESTION—UNEMPLOYED, SUSTENANCE, ETC.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Agriculture: What amount was paid for sustenance and other allowances to unemployed throughout the State for the 15 months ended 30th September, 1928?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The total amount expended in unemployment relief for the period mentioned was £12,812 14s. 4d. Of this £7,096 11s. has been expended since 1st July this year.

## QUESTIONS (2)—STATE FINANCE.

### *Public Salaries Charges.*

Mr. THOMSON asked the Premier: Will he request the Auditor General to indicate to this House what in his opinion is the correct amount that should be charged to public salaries on revenue account, as per his criticism on page 38 of his report, 1927?

The PREMIER replied: The Government cannot proffer a request of this nature to the Auditor General, who is a servant of Parliament and not of the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: May I ask, Mr. Speaker, through whom I should prefer my request? I am desirous of obtaining a reply for the information of Parliament.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do it by way of motion.

Mr. THOMSON: I should like to know how I am to proceed if I am unable to get the information from the Premier.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may table a motion or move for a return or ask that the papers containing the information he desires be laid on the Table of the House.

### *Surcharges.*

Hon. W. J. GEORGE (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the Auditor General's report regarding the number of surcharges going back to 1904 and 1905, and in view of the fact that other Governments have tried to do something, will he endeavour to clean up the score? In my opinion, it is a disgrace that there should be these surcharges.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Premier: You are making a speech.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot comment on his question.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: May I ask the question?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may ask the direct question.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: Then I ask the Premier the question.

The PREMIER replied: The only thing I can say is that the number of surcharges

is not nearly so large now as it was when the hon. member was a member of the previous Government.

Hon. W. J. George: That is right, but they are a disgrace to the State.

The PREMIER: I do not know that there is any more need to take action now than there was in years gone by.

Mr. Marshall: Not so much.

The PREMIER: They are of no importance.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Panton, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the Hon. M. F. Troy (Mt. Magnet) on the ground of ill-health.

### BILL—BUNBURY ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—RAILWAYS DISCONTINUANCE.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1928-29.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 16th October; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Department of the Premier continued (Hon. P. Collier, Minister).

*Vote—Public Service Commissioner, £1,528:*

Item—Secretary, £576:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The expenditure last year was £184 and the estimate for this year shows an increase of £392. Will the Premier explain the item?

The PREMIER: Last year the Public Service Commissioner was absent on sick leave and the secretary was acting.

Mr. THOMSON: I should like to see the Public Service Commissioner's duties widened somewhat.

The Premier: You cannot discuss the Public Service Commissioner on this item. The secretary is not the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. THOMSON: Additional officers should be attached to this office.

The CHAIRMAN: On which item is the hon. member speaking?

Mr. THOMSON: I will make it No. 2.

Item—Clerks ranging from £192 to £252 per annum, £682:

Mr. THOMSON: We ought to increase the staff so that the work may be done more efficiently than it is being done at present. I am not casting any reflection on the Public Service Commissioner, but the state of the finances gives cause for a good deal of concern, and a close scrutiny will have to be exercised by the Public Service Commissioner and his officers during the current year. It may be in the interests of the service to give the Commissioner an assistant or an inspector. The ex-Commissioner of Railways had such assistance from Mr. Backshall, who materially helped him to render very efficient service to the State. By this means a considerable saving would be effected in the working of the various departments that come within the purview of the Public Service Commissioner. I sometimes wonder whether the departmental heads are appealed to when it is desired to reduce expenditure. No essential service should be abolished, but there may be considerable overlapping of departments. The effect of the action I suggest has been beneficial in the past. I commend my suggestion to the Government, who have an arduous task to perform during the next 12 months.

The CHAIRMAN: This item does not deal with the Public Service Commissioner, who is under a special Act. I have allowed the hon. member some latitude.

Mr. THOMSON: I wish to point out how beneficial it would be to the State if the Public Service Commissioner had an assistant such as I have indicated. This is an instance in which increased expenditure would be more than justified.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Government Motor Car Service, £7,491:*

Item—Maintenance of workshop, motor vehicles, and bicycles, and hire of cars for all departments, £9,500:

Mr. SLEEMAN: The amount of this item seems large. It could be reduced by not keeping certain cars exclusively for high

officials. Some of these cars, which the officials drive themselves, stand in the garage for long periods, with the result that cars have to be hired from outside garages for Government work. The cars of the officials in question should be available for Government service instead of being kept for the officials to go to the club or to dinner.

Mr. ANGELO: Will the Premier explain why he is asking for £3,500 more this year than last year? Possibly cars are required for the work of the Main Roads Board. However, the jump is a big one, nearly 55 per cent.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: If the statements of the member for Fremantle are well founded, whereas certain public servants have cars supplied to them largely for personal services, the cars being driven by those officials, other cars have to be hired for Government work while the cars referred to are standing idle. I gather that the privilege is enjoyed by some departmental heads, but such a position is unsatisfactory. Cars for the Main Roads Board, I believe, do not come out of this vote, but are supplied out of Main Roads Board funds. If those cars are included in the item, the increase is justified.

Mr. SAMPSON: If cars are provided for certain officials in order to enable them to carry out their duties, and if these officials are their own drivers, I doubt the wisdom of letting the cars be used by other officers. A car does not stand up as well with two or more drivers as with one. Each car has its peculiarities. In the case of a highly-paid official it is economical to let him have a car for his work. Sometimes it has struck me that the environs of the Government service station are in the nature of a car-wrecking establishment. Numerous motors are to be seen there at various times, apparently abandoned; and I do not know that the consideration they should receive is given to them. Further, there is a wide variety of makes. Consideration might be given to the selection of one or two makes, though I do not suggest a monopoly. When the Premier has decided what is the best car for Government purposes, why not utilise that make?

The Premier: There is such a variety of work for our motors that we could not have one make of car. There is town work, bush work, back-country work, and so forth.

Mr. SAMPSON: There are different types of cars in the same make.

The Premier: Not many.

Mr. SAMPSON: It is worth while inquiring the number of cars and trucks which, so to speak, litter the premises. There appears to be always a number thrown out of work. I venture the opinion that no car agent would use the statement regarding mileages in the Government service as an advertisement for the sale of other cars of the same type. I question whether the motor cars are not abandoned too soon.

The Premier: My word they are not!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I anticipated an increased vote on account of the increased number of cars in use. In order to prevent the misuse of cars, I think "W.A. Government" should be printed on every car.

Mr. Angelo: Why not suggest a "broad arrow?"

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Then, again, I suggest to the Premier that when cars are purchased, we should not send our money to America. I am not worrying about the increased vote because it is in accordance with the progress of the State, but I am in doubt as to whether the cars used by the Main Roads Board come within the scope of the vote. If they do, there is something radically wrong with it.

The PREMIER: It will be agreed that where the Government cars are used by so many different departments it is not easy to exercise that strict economy that would be effected by a private individual or by a private company. Doubtless cars driven by Government officers do not have as long a life as motors driven by men who own them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A car owner goes where he pleases, but an official has to drive where he is sent.

The PREMIER: And often over roads that he would not traverse from choice. There are many reasons why Government cars do not last as long as private cars.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Are Government officers allowed to take their cars home at night?

The PREMIER: Yes. A practice has grown up for years past by which officers in important positions have been provided with cars.

Hon. J. H. Smith: Are they allowed to use those cars for their wives and families, or anyone else they may desire to drive about?

The PREMIER: Those officers are not supposed to use their cars for private purposes. Instructions have been issued from

time to time that officers will be dealt with if they use Government cars for private purposes. It would be a pretty big job to check all the cars. Although I do not wish to anticipate a discussion on the next item, which deals with number plates, I can mention that those plates have checked the tendency of Government employees to use cars illegitimately.

Mr. Marshall: The plates are a little too small!

The PREMIER: At any rate it is interesting to note that when the number plates were placed on the Government cars, some Government officers found no further use for them and their cars were returned to the garage. As to the cost of the Government motor car service, hon. members must recognise that it represents a growing activity. Additional cars are coming into use every week, not only by the Government but by other people as well. Perhaps there is too great a tendency in that direction. The item under discussion covers the cost of petrol, maintenance, and upkeep. The fact that the vote was exceeded by £3,000 last year does not of itself indicate that there was undue extravagance or excessive expenditure. It could merely be an indication that too much conservatism was employed in arriving at the estimate last year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, but that is what you said last time! It is about worn out by now.

The PREMIER: No doubt the Leader of the Opposition thoroughly understands the explanation.

Mr. Angelo: Are the Main Roads Board cars dealt with under this heading?

The PREMIER: The vote covers the cost of petrol, tyres and tubes, spare parts, motor and push bicycles, the hire of additional cars when required, and, generally speaking, covers the cost of supplying petrol to other departments for cars used by them. We have established a bowser pump for the supply of petrol and we have saved a large amount on that installation. The Government use 146 cars, 198 trucks, and 28 tractors and road rollers. Quite a number of the cars and trucks are brought into the metropolitan area and repaired at the garage. Petrol is supplied to them under this item as well.

Item—Special number plates for Government cars, £50.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government cars should be marked in a more simple fashion. I do not know that the cars are used improperly to such an extent as some hon. members think. I do not know that any complaint can be lodged against an officer using a car in the country districts if he is there on departmental business. That sort of thing is done by every man employed by every business concern in the State.

The Premier: What simpler marking would you suggest?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think the plate at present used is necessary.

Mr. Marshall: It is a bit too small.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A more simple marking would be suitable.

Mr. Marshall: The number plates have tickled up the Government officials.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I suppose the hon. member would like to see some design in flaming red with blue bands! I suggest that the object in view would be achieved by a design other than the blue and white abortion that is now used.

The Premier: I admit that it is not very artistic.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think it is a proper way to mark Government property.

The Premier: Of course, many big business firms have distinctive marks placed on their cars.

Hon. G. Taylor: Some have the names of the firm.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, for advertising purposes.

Mr. Angelo: Why not paint a black swan on the cars?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We might well have something less conspicuous than the present plates.

Mr. Sleeman: You are speaking for yourself.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, I am not. The Government cars ought to carry a distinctive mark, but one not quite so conspicuous as the present plates.

Mr. Withers: We want something by which the public can recognise a Government car when they see one.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Some hon. members would have on Government cars plates even more conspicuous than those in use. But if we were all to do our duty as well as do the men in the Public Service, who are so often criticised here, we

should not be so ready to complain. Of course, Government officials have no right to use Government cars privately, and I do not suppose they do it, or at all events not to any appreciable extent. It must be remembered that we have Government cars all over the State from Wyndham to Eucla, and that we can scarcely expect the standard of use to be uniform throughout.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: There must be some reason why so many heads of departments refused to use Government cars after the distinguishing plates were affixed. We know there was a strike by some of the heads of departments, and that they put their cars back into the Government garage.

Mr. Marshall: They should have been put in with them.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The objection to the distinguishing mark is that it declares the car to be a Government car. But why should the occupant of the car feel that to be a disgrace? It would be interesting to know why the heads of the departments turned in their cars after the plates were affixed. I believe that, in the main, Government officials do their duty, but I do not see why if a water supply inspector has to do his work in a motor car bearing the Government mark, an officer of the Lands Department should count it degrading to be called upon to do his work in a similarly marked vehicle. Cars used by Ministers themselves are quite apart from other Government cars, and should not carry any distinguishing mark. An officer who has a Government car in which he runs home at night is not likely to use any other car when in the evening he wants to bring his wife and family from Claremont or Greenmount to one of the Perth theatres. Of course, he will jump into the Government car assigned for his work. If I were a Government official supplied with a car I would have no compunction about doing that. But I do not know why the Government should exempt any of their officers from carrying those distinctive plates on their cars. I believe quite a number of the officers rebelled against the fixing of those plates.

The Premier: They had to back down.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I compliment the Government on having stood by their decision to have those plates affixed. There can be no real objection to the carrying of such plates on Government cars. They serve to show at a glance that the car is a Government car, intended for work, not for pleasure. When we see such a working car

standing at some pleasure grounds, we begin to think.

The Premier: Or standing in front of a theatre.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, or in front of a club: If any member were to put in his Christmas holidays down about Cottesloe Beach—

The Premier: Or at Bunbury or at Albany.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What about Rottnest?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: But for those plates one would find quite a number of Government cars at holiday resorts. Certainly the Government should insist upon all Government cars, except those used for ministerial purposes, bearing the Government plates. I notice that all the Main Roads Board cars carry those plates.

Mr. Sleeman: Are you sure of that?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Well, most of them do. All important business firms in Perth, now have their names on their cars and lorries.

Mr. Marshall: But that is advertising.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Do not the Government need an advertisement? Those plates show that the cars belong to a progressive Government. I am sure the Premier would be well advised to have those plates affixed on all Government cars except those used by Ministers.

Mr. Teesdale: Would you put such a plate on the Black Maria?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Why not?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Some members opposite have hinted that members on this side would like to see the Government cars carrying even a bigger plaster than they have to-day. I do not want to see any bigger plate introduced, but I certainly think the existing plates might be a bit more artistic than they are. I object to the preferential treatment of certain officers in the Government service. To-day we have in the service two varieties of Government plates, and in addition the ordinary number plate. There should be but one plate for all Government cars. Somebody spoke of a strike amongst the Government officials because of those plates. Of course, no one on this side believes in strikes, and so the Government would not have tolerated a strike.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It was only a stop-work meeting.

Mr. SLEEMAN: No doubt a strong protest was made and certain officials took direct action, some of them putting their cars

into the Government garage and refusing to use them. Certain of those cars when they came out again bore a conspicuous official mark which the departmental people term the "blue-back." The blue-back is what the junior officer has to use, while the intermediate man has a plate with a white back, and the heads are allowed to carry private number plates. I think the Government plates should be a bit smaller and less conspicuous, but I also think that all the Government cars should be marked alike, and I hope that with the provision on the Estimates this year, this will be done.

Mr. MARSHALL: In this matter I am entirely opposed to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Teesdale: Oh, naturally.

Mr. MARSHALL: I have always accepted the principle that certain Government employees are provided with motor cars because certain obligations in respect of their work have been imposed upon them by Parliament. But outside that Government work those officials are no more entitled to use the cars supplied to them than are any other Government employees. Yet the Leader of the Opposition implies that because a departmental officer has the use of a car and enjoys an elevated social position by virtue of his being able to take that car to Kalgoorlie or Albany or Bunbury, he should use it for joy riding.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not suggest that at all.

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member is getting to that stage in life when any suggestion he makes is apt to be misconstrued.

Mr. Teesdale: That is a rotten thing to say. On a point of order! Is the hon. member in order in referring to an older member's stage of life? It is a dirty insult?

The CHAIRMAN: Order, order!

Mr. MARSHALL: The statement made by the Leader of the Opposition was that any of us, if Government employees, and called upon to go to Kalgoorlie in a car, would be justified in using that car when our day's work was over. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition that the officer who gets a motor car for departmental work is very fortunate, since thousands of Government employees have to walk or, alternatively, pay their own tram fares. A Government officer is provided with a motor car only when it is economical that he should have a car. That car should be used for

none but the purposes of that officer's work, whether in Kalgoorlie, Albany or Bunbury. Having done his job, the officer is not entitled to any further use of that car. I am surprised at the Leader of the Opposition suggesting it might be right for a departmental officer to use a Government car outside his official duties. Evidently there is some degree of accuracy in the assertion that certain officers are entitled to use Government cars without anything appearing upon the vehicles showing that they belong to the Government.

The Premier: There are only two that I know of.

Mr. MARSHALL: Many cars are used in connection with Government work of minor importance. No Government car should be used unless it has upon it a conspicuous plate indicating to whom that car belonged. When a Government car is used and does not bear any such distinguishing mark, the implication is that the officer using it is one of high degree.

Mr. Sleeman: You believe he should be free.

Mr. MARSHALL: I wish the hon. member would be quiet. If the officer is one of high degree, the inference is that he is drawing a large salary, that he is being paid in proportion to the important work he does. If that officer objects to the car he uses bearing a Government plate, he is in a position to buy his own car. He can then use it either for departmental work or for his own pleasure. Government officials should not be permitted to use motor cars in such a way as to indicate that they are more respected than are other Government officials. The Leader of the Opposition contends that certain Government employees occupying high posts should receive more consideration than others.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. MARSHALL: He indicated that less conspicuous number plates should be used. There should be no distinction between the kind of Government plate that is used on any of the State cars. No Government official should have any special privilege not accorded to others.

Mr. ANGELO: The cars used by the Governor are distinguished by a plate bearing a Crown upon it. Why should we not follow the same example and have Gov-

ernment cars distinguished by a coat of arms, such as appears on our free passes?

The Premier: We will call for competitive designs.

Mr. ANGELO: The design I mentioned would fill the Bill.

The Premier: That might not convey to the man in the street that it was a Government car.

Mr. ANGELO: It would have all the effect we desire. We are trying to evolve some method by which Government cars can be known, without hurting the feelings of Ministers or distinguished Government officials.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Most members seem to consider that Government cars should be distinguished by certain number plates. Why should any Government official object to that? There should be one standard to cover all cars in Government use. If officers were using service cars out of office hours, they would be detected by the public and would be reported. Some officers live in the suburban areas. It would pay the State, instead of allowing them to use the cars in going between their home and their office, to give them free passes over the railway.

The Premier: No man has a car to take him from his home to his office. Officers are given the use of cars in order to travel round the country.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Every Government car should bear a standard mark.

The Premier: So they do.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: One or two Government cars bear no such distinguishing mark. To test the feeling of the Committee I move—

That the item be reduced by £1.

Mr. MARSHALL: I should like to know if there are two or three different kinds of number plates in use, and if there are one or two Government cars bearing no indication upon them that they belong to the State.

The Premier: The first number plate that came out was blue on a white background. The officers objected to that, saying that the plate was too conspicuous and lacked artistic effect. Officers said the plate would not be bad if there was white lettering on a blue background. I thought that would do so long as the name "Government" was on the plate. So it comes

about that there are two kinds of plates, but the new plates will all be of the latter kind. There are two officers in the service whose Government cars bear no distinguishing mark.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Any sort of mark on the ordinary plate would be sufficient.

The PREMIER: I think it is necessary to have the word "Government" upon every plate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: My objection is that Government cars are used at election time against us.

The PREMIER: I do not think so, though I have no idea what officers in the country do. If they are used on the one side, I am sure they have also been used on the other side, although it is wrong in both cases. I have not used a Government car at election time, although I am entitled to do so. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition has done it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not for electioneering purposes. Ministers have the right to use Government cars.

The PREMIER: If I want to travel around the country at any time I shall do so in a Government car, and I do not think I shall be committing any offence. A member in another place was so unscrupulous as to refer to my having taken part in a by-election in a Government motor car.

Mr. Marshall: Was there a Government number plate upon it?

The PREMIER: No. I am not going to have a Government plate on any car that I ride in. When civil servants become Ministers they can do without the Government plates. Ministers are entitled to ride in cars that do not bear Government plates. To criticise me because I rode in a Government car on that occasion was a most despicable thing to do. The member who indulged in that criticism has himself taken part in elections and ridden in Government cars. He was driven from one place to another in a Government car on the goldfields. I intend to use a Ministerial car whenever I desire to do so. I think I am earning my money in my job. If I want to travel, I do not intend to hire a car. If I desire to do so, I travel in a Ministerial railway car at election time, just as the Leader of the Opposition has done. It is not an offence for a Minister to use a

Ministerial car anywhere and on any occasion.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I intend to support the amendment, but I do not believe that Ministers should have a distinguishing number plate on their cars. Ministers' cars should be exempt. All I want is that Government servants, irrespective of whether they be on the bottom or on the top rung of the ladder, should be placed on the same footing.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: There is no suggestion that cars used by Ministers should have the Government number plate, but I do not think there should be any discrimination amongst officers. All Government cars, other than ministerial cars, should be numbered in exactly the same way. The Premier is quite within his rights in using the railway whenever he pleases, or a motor car at any time if he thinks that would be a speedier way of moving about.

Mr. SAMPSON: We have to be very jealous of the reputation of members of the House.

The Premier: Don't you think I am as jealous of my reputation as you are of yours?

Mr. SAMPSON: I do.

The Premier: Then why mention it?

Mr. SAMPSON: I venture the opinion that the use of Government motor cars is likely to cause criticism on the part of the public.

Mr. Angelo: Do you not use the Government railways?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Government railways pass is an acknowledged perquisite of members.

The Premier: When Parliament is dissolved you still use your pass on the railways, though you are no longer a member.

Mr. SAMPSON: Members continue to receive an allowance.

The Premier: But you are no longer a member; still you use your pass.

Mr. SAMPSON: That is definitely allowed under the Act.

The Premier: As you have such a fine sense of honour, you should not use your railway pass. Anyhow, this is not a very elevating discussion.

Mr. SAMPSON: I was amazed to hear that motor cars had been used by Ministers during electioneering periods.

Mr. Sleeman: Is the hon. member in order in discussing elections in connection with this vote?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is talking wide of the mark.

Mr. SAMPSON: I remember that three members of the previous Government had to find their own cars.

The Premier: That is what hurt you; you had to pay them.

Mr. SAMPSON: I know that Mr. Scaddan, when he was a Minister—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will keep to the amendment and the item.

Mr. SAMPSON: I thought I was discussing a matter that had already been referred to.

Mr. LAMBERT: This is certainly a most elevating discussion! It would hardly do credit to a tenth-rate debating society.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will please speak to the item.

Mr. Lambert: I intend to speak to the item.

The CHAIRMAN: Well, the hon. member had better do so. He began by criticising members.

Mr. LAMBERT: I was speaking to the vote when you called me to order.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not be impertinent to the Chair.

Mr. LAMBERT: I have no wish to be impertinent. The Government are justified in putting distinguishing plates on their cars.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment before the Chair is that the item be reduced by £1.

Mr. LAMBERT: If hon. members around me will keep order, I shall speak to the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LAMBERT: In the country I have noticed motor lorries being used for carting furniture and liquor to an hotel. Therefore it is pretty nearly time that Government cars had distinguishing plates. It is the right of the Government to protect the property of the State and in respect of motor cars the only way to do is to put distinguishing plates upon them. I am glad the Government took action. We know it was resented, but there had been abuses in the use of cars. Members could cite many instances of abuses if they wished to do so. I am surprised that anyone should take exception to what the Government have done. We want more plates and even bigger plates. As to whether they should be pink, red or white does not concern me.



Mr. J. H. SMITH: My object in moving the amendment was to give members an opportunity to express their opinions on the subject of Government cars. The Premier, I am sure, will understand from what has been said that the wish of the House is that no Government official should use a motor car without a distinguishing plate. In the past officials seemed to control Ministers in this respect. Now if we allow them to have the same privilege as the Premier and his Ministers they will consider themselves the king pins of the State. I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Note put and passed.

*Vote—Printing, £1,333:*

Mr. THOMSON: The estimate shows an increase of £3,404 over last year's expenditure. The revenue received last year was £39,650, and the estimated revenue this year is £43,000. Why the discrepancy between the estimated revenue and expenditure? If the Printing Office is doing work for other departments, a recoup should be shown, but the only recoups mentioned are from the Commonwealth departments, trading concerns and business undertakings. If other departments are being charged for work done there should not be any loss.

The PREMIER: Surely the hon. member knows that the Printing Office does an enormous amount of work that is not paid for.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is one of the best managed departments.

The PREMIER: It does Government printing and receives no pay for it, except work done for the Commonwealth, trading concerns and business undertakings. There would be no point in keeping books and crediting the Printing Office for work done for the Premier's office. It would merely mean more expenditure and no benefit.

Mr. Sampson: Are costs kept of the work done for the different departments?

The PREMIER: Yes, for all work. Every paper laid on the Table shows the cost incurred for printing.

Mr. Sampson: Is the work done for the Commonwealth based on bare cost, or does it return some profit?

The PREMIER: I think the work is undertaken on a business basis.

Item—Government Printer, £960:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The Premier said all parliamentary papers bore a note of the cost of printing. I have looked through most of the papers tabled this session and cannot see any such note.

The Premier: Then I was not aware of the omission.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I have an idea it has been omitted for some years.

The Minister for Works: The financial returns are the only ones on which it is not shown.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It costs a bit to put the cost on and it does not make the cost less if it is put on.

Mr. SAMPSON: After having visited many printing offices in different parts of the world, I consider our Government Printing Office compares favourably with the best commercial offices. The work turned out is excellent. I recall the "Handbook of Western Australia" printed a couple of years ago.

Mr. Griffiths: That was a very fine production.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, one that compared favourably with similar works produced in the best printing offices of the world. Some very fine colour work is done at the Government Printing Office. I have been through the office and have been impressed with the manner in which the plant is set out and the general orderliness with which the work is carried on. Of the Printing Office the Government might well be proud.

The Premier: We are.

Item—Foremen, compositors, machinists, bookbinders, machine paper rulers, storemen, stone cleaners, printers, stereotyper, apprentices, messenger and all other employees, including tea money, overtime, commissions, travelling expenses and sick leave, etc., £43,000:

Mr. THOMSON: This item shows an increase of £3,000 over the estimate for last year.

The Premier: The increase over last year's expenditure is £1,092.

Mr. THOMSON: I was dealing with last year's estimate. I have no desire to criticise the work or qualifications of the staff; I endorse what has been said. Departmental recoups are made for other services and there should be recoups for printing. I

cannot see why the cost of charging up the work should be prohibitive, especially if the Printing Office keeps cost of work done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would mean a lot of bookkeeping.

The Premier: If the Premier's office has printing done, why pay the Printing Office for it and have it paid back again? It would merely mean building up the bookkeeping.

Mr. THOMSON: Is there any adequate check on the printing?

The Premier: We know the cost of the work done.

The Minister for Justice: And the department incurring the expense.

Mr. THOMSON: On one occasion the Premier said members were in the unfortunate position of having to accept what a Minister told us. I want to ascertain whether the £71,000 expenditure is justified. Are we getting our printing done as economically as we would if outside printers submitted prices?

Mr. Kenneally: A little private enterprise?

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, I believe in it. I also believe in having an adequate check on Government work. I am merely urging the adopting of a principle for which I stand.

The Minister for Works: How about the Government Printer having a check on private enterprise and giving him a chance to compete against private printing works?

Mr. THOMSON: If quotes were obtained from outside, we could be informed whether the Government Printing Office was doing the work more cheaply.

The Minister for Works: Do you know of any Government in the world that has not its own printing office?

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

Mr. THOMSON: More information than is available should be supplied to members. I should like to know why the expenditure exceeded the estimate last year by £1,908. The Premier is supposed to have all the information available.

The Premier: No doubt a genius like yourself would have it.

Mr. THOMSON: In 1921 the Premier, when on this side of the House, said the Ministers came down to the House and made their statements when introducing the Estimates, and practically the whole of the Estimates had to be accepted.

The CHAIRMAN: I doubt whether the hon. member is dealing with this particular item.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, I am. The Premier, when on this side of the House, asked Ministers for information.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has asked a question on this subject.

The Premier: He has been on his feet for a quarter of an hour, and yet wants to know why he cannot get the information.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The success of this department depends upon the keenness of the management from the head. I know the Government Printer very well. He is an exceedingly keen man.

The Premier: He is one of the best and most capable officers in the service.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He does work not only for the State but for the Commonwealth. If a book has to be printed for a department, it is usual to obtain a price for it from the Government Printer. The work is always capably done. We cause a lot of printing by appointing select committees and Royal Commissions. Government departments also order very freely. The hon. member will find that this cost is not out of the way. If the system of management at the printing office could be applied to all Government departments, much saving would be effected. If there is extravagance in printing, the departments should be warned. The Government Printer conducts his department efficiently.

Mr. Sampson: Are as many apprentices engaged in the Government Printing Office as the award permits?

The PREMIER: I have no idea. The member for Katanning spoke for a quarter of an hour on this item. He said he wanted information, and complained that he could not get it. He was the first member to speak on it. I had no opportunity of giving any information. I do not know now what he wants. He did not make it clear to me. He said something about opportunities being given for work to be done outside. He expressed his views, as he was entitled to do, but they did not call for the giving of any information. There is an increase in this item of £1,092. This is caused by the heavy work that has been involved in the printing of the Federal rolls for this year. This has necessitated the employment of the extra men mentioned in the item.

Hon. W. J. George: You will be paid for that.

The PREMIER: Yes, but we have to find the money so that the printing may be done.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier is resentful because I have asked for information.

The Premier: You keep on complaining.

Mr. THOMSON: I am entitled to ask for it, and I am going to ask for it.

The Premier: Of course you are; hear, hear!

Mr. THOMSON: If the Premier thinks he will prevent me from asking for information, he is making a big mistake.

The CHAIRMAN: I shall be glad if the hon. member will speak to the Item.

Mr. THOMSON: I asked how this money had been expended. It was quite obvious the Premier is following the practice of other Ministers, as he indicated himself in 1921. If then he was entitled to ask for information, I am entitled to ask for it now, and to receive courtesy at his hands.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not the point at issue. I think the Premier has answered the question as to why there has been an increase in the Vote.

Mr. THOMSON: After he has endeavoured to hold me up to ridicule.

The Premier: Go ahead.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Premier wants his Estimates through, I advise him to be courteous.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in threatening another member.

Mr. THOMSON: I expect to receive courtesy from the Premier, and I insist upon getting it.

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

Mr. THOMSON: I am doing so.

Hon. W. J. George: What is the amount of the tea money?

Mr. THOMSON: I am entitled to ask for this information. That is my job. There was an increase of £3,000 over the Estimates of last year. Why was the estimate exceeded?

The Premier: Because of the printing of great volumes of "Hansard" that you have been filling with nonsense.

The CHAIRMAN: Hon. members must stop this cross-firing.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Premier is going to endeavour to get his Estimates through in

this way and to treat us with discourtesy, he must expect to meet with opposition.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must speak to the Item. This cross-firing must cease. Members must get on with the Estimates.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course. One hon. member has just said to me, "What effect will all the opposition have?"

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must discuss the Item. Whether it is of any benefit or not does not enter into the question.

Mr. THOMSON: We are entitled to ask these questions, and to find out why the estimate of last year was exceeded by £1,092. Will the Premier explain that?

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that this Vote be agreed to.

Mr. THOMSON: Then the Premier is not going to accord us the courtesy of a reply.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: I have asked the Premier a question.

The CHAIRMAN: The Premier has made a statement as to the reason for the increase.

Mr. THOMSON: That is for next year. We are entitled to know about the expenditure incurred last year. What is included in the amount for tea money?

The PREMIER: When officers have to return to work in the evening, it is the regular rule in the public service that they shall be paid tea money. That has been the practice for years.

Mr. THOMSON: What amount is involved in that? Does this include printers who are working under the Arbitration award?

Mr. Sleeman: They are allowed tea money under the Arbitration award.

Mr. THOMSON: How much is involved in the tea money?

The Minister for Works: I was employed there for 13 years and never got any tea money.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier should have the information available.

The PREMIER: I regret that I have not minute details as to how much was spent on tea money, how much on postage, and so forth.

Item—Sick fund, £250:

Mr. ANGELO: What is the meaning of this item? Last year £250 was voted for

a sick fund, and none of the money was spent. A similar item does not occur in connection with any other department.

The PREMIER: It is peculiar to the Government Printing Office. It represents the Government's contribution on a pound for pound basis to a sick fund to which the employees also contribute.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Government did not contribute to it last year?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. SAMPSON: In that case it would seem that the Government need not comply with the arbitration award for printers. That award involves payment for all time lost through sickness.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Tourist Bureau, £2,132:*

Mr. THOMSON: Will the Premier give us a resumé of the work done by the Tourist Bureau?

The Premier: No, indeed I will not.

Mr. THOMSON: In my idea the bureau is not functioning properly.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is dealing with the first item. I do not think we can have a general discussion.

Mr. THOMSON: It has been the practice to deal with divisions on the first item. The bureau is not giving the results that might be expected. The estimated revenue is shown as nil, which is not quite fair to the bureau. In the interests of the State, more money should be available for securing publicity overseas. When visiting another British dominion I found that for days before the steamer reached port, there were available numbers of booklets describing the advantages of the dominion from the aspect of land settlement, and also drawing attention to places of interest. Owing to lack of funds our Tourist Bureau is not able to perform equally useful functions. At Durban, for example, there is a fine tourist bureau which gives valuable information to visitors. I do not wish it to be thought that I am casting any reflection upon the director of our Tourist Bureau.

The Premier: I think the director is doing great work.

Mr. THOMSON: Certainly, with the limited amount of money available to him.

The Premier: It is quite sufficient. We cannot give him any more.

Mr. THOMSON: Other British dominions are almost lavish in their expenditure on publicity. Encouragement of tourist traffic must mean to South Africa, for instance, an annual circulation of hundreds of thousands of pounds by tourists. Our bureau should be granted funds enabling it to broadcast pamphlets concerning Western Australia. The indirect benefit from such publicity is enormous.

The Premier: The bureau has not been denied anything.

Mr. THOMSON: I understand the director has received a polite intimation from his chief, on behalf of the Treasurer, that the bureau's expenditure must not be increased.

The Premier: For the past four weeks the State has been inundated with tourists.

Mr. THOMSON: In co-operation with the newspapers, a great deal has been done latterly. The chief credit for that is due to Mr. Smith, the managing editor of the "West Australian." The "Reso" trip has also been beneficial, but that trip originated with the Victorian Railways Commissioner. The more outside capital we can introduce, the better it will be for Western Australia. Increased expenditure on publicity through the Tourist Bureau may mean attracting men with capital and other desirable immigrants.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I look upon the Tourist Bureau as practically a department whose duty it is to put forward to all and sundry, as far as means will allow, outside the State and outside Australia, the various points of interest in Western Australia. The total expenditure on the bureau is about £2,000, while incidentals amounting to only £350 are allowed for providing the pabulum sent abroad in the shape of advertisements, booklets and pamphlets. The amount seems to me absolutely inadequate. If Western Australia can afford a Tourist Bureau costing £2,000 a year—I would not mind if the amount were larger—it cannot afford to stint expenditure on advertisement. Years ago trains used to travel along the Great Southern line at night time, and there was little settlement along the railway. Then arrangements were made to run the trains during the day-time, and settlement really started from that period; people could see the country, and they talked about it and advertised it. With £350 for incidentals, the Tourist Bureau cannot do justice either to itself or to the State. If the Premier could

give some special time to the bureau, he would learn that with a comparatively small increase in expenditure great results could be obtained.

Mr. ANGELO: On the opposite side of the vestibule, where the Tourist Bureau is situated, is a large room with big glass windows. That room is not often used.

The Premier: It is always in use for the exhibition of local products.

Mr. ANGELO: Those exhibits remain there for weeks at a time, but I think the room could be better utilised if it were made available for the purposes of the Tourist Bureau. In Sydney the Tourist Bureau is established in Martin Place, the principal centre of the city. In the large windows are huge photographs and information about the different beauty spots, and tours that can be undertaken. Often there are large crowds in front of the windows and various tours result from inspections made of the photographs. If something similar were provided by the Tourist Bureau here, not only would our own people be induced to visit our various beauty spots, but visitors from other parts would learn of the trips to be made. The director is doing as much as he possibly can in the circumstances, but he requires more assistance. I am surprised that no revenue is obtained by the department. The bureau acts as agent for the State Shipping Service, and all agents are supposed to get commission on account of work done for other concerns. Why does not the Tourist Bureau get credit for revenue under that heading? Then in Sydney the Tourist Bureau gains some revenue from the fares booked for excursions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have a greater spending department in that State.

Mr. ANGELO: But the bureau here should be allowed something for work that is done. The bureau recommends various hotels throughout the State, and surely the bureau should receive some commission in respect of visitors sent to those hotels.

Mr. Thomson: The present position is not fair to the director.

Mr. ANGELO: The Premier has indicated that the director will receive more assistance, and we can rely on that help being forthcoming.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £11,953:*

Item—Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery, and Travelling Library, £7,800:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am glad to see that there is a small addition to the vote and that £200, which represents the increase, has been made available for starting the travelling library for country schools. It is not a big sum, but it will be a start. When we consider the number of schools throughout the country areas, we must realise the number of lads who leave school each year and remain in the country districts. If good books are available, their teachers will recommend the lads to read those books, and that will be a very good thing. While we do not want to advocate increased expenditure in these times, still I am rather sorry that the vote in this instance is not larger.

The Premier: I was advised that £200 would be sufficient, but, like most other things, the work will grow.

Mr. Angelo: How far north will the books be sent?

The Premier: The scheme is not limited to any area.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope the books will be carefully selected and that they will be instructive and interesting. In these days it is possible to get instructive books that make comparatively light reading.

The Premier: The books will be selected by the Education Department.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope they will be well selected, for I have been through the country districts and know the need there is for decent books.

The Premier: If good books are chosen, they will have the effect of turning boys' minds along the right lines, instead of allowing them to indulge in trashy reading.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Most of the modern novels are not fit for young people to read.

Item—Zoological Gardens, £3,000:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The Zoological Gardens provide a fine resort for the children and I regret that no increase is provided.

The Premier: There is the natural increase!

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The gardens are a great attraction to visitors and I know that those in control find it difficult to keep things going.

Mr. ANGELO: I do not for one moment desire to suggest that the Zoological Gardens

should be done away with; on the contrary, I desire to see them considerably improved. The time has arrived when we should consider whether the Zoological Gardens are in the right place, and we should decide that question before any more money is spent upon the institution. The land upon which the zoo is situated is far too valuable for such purposes. Even to-day the land could be cut up and sold and the money derived by that means would enable the Zoological Gardens to be shifted to a more suitable spot. It is not many years ago that the Zoological Gardens at Sydney were removed from their old site, where the land had become too valuable, and were transferred to the present location at Taronga Park. Now it is recognised as the finest Zoological Gardens in the Southern Hemisphere. I recommend the Government to seriously consider that phase before agreeing to spend any more money on our own institution. If the Zoological Gardens were transferred further down the river, it would be invaluable in opening up the outer areas and would considerably improve our ferry services. The site that appeals to me is to be found just this side of Point Walter. It may be said that that would be too far away, but the same thing was said when the Sydney zoo was shifted to Taronga Park. Then, again, from a health point of view, I consider that the presence of the Zoological Gardens in the midst of a thickly populated area like South Perth is not to be commended. I hope the Government will give consideration to the points I have raised.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Centenary Celebrations, £10,000:*

Mr. THOMSON: What is the £10,000 provided for?

The PREMIER: That is the amount it is considered will be required this year for the centenary celebrations. Of course, I am not very sanguine about getting through on that amount.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will not be able to get through on anything near that amount.

The PREMIER: We know that there will be quite a lot of expenditure in many and varied directions, but the committee in charge of the celebrations have estimated that they will be able to get through on £20,000, £10,000 of which is being provided this year and £10,000 will be provided next

year. We shall be lucky if we get through on that amount.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think there is any chance of getting through on the amount indicated by the Premier. I do not know that anyone can estimate what the celebrations will cost this State.

The Premier: There is no basis upon which the estimate can be made.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course not. If we are to have celebrations, they must be decently carried out. The revenue to the Treasury will be considerable. If we spend £20,000, we shall make a considerable profit on the year because people will move about the State; they will pay railway fares, and will spend money in various directions.

The Premier: But most of the travelling will be done by concession fares.

*[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]*

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Still the department will make money, and so too will the Treasury. But we are not going to get through on £10,000, if indeed we can get through on £20,000. We must do the work decently if we do it at all. Contributions from the public will not be very great; in fact I do not think the public should be asked to contribute. I am afraid the State must foot the Bill.

Mr. Clydesdale: We have not raised any money up to date.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is of no use either raising or spending money now, for the date is still too far away.

Mr. THOMSON: Probably I shall be told that the question ought to be asked when we are dealing with the Loan Estimates, but I am wondering whether the Government have considered any extensions to Parliament House as part and parcel of the centenary celebrations. I understand we have in the grounds at Parliament House a foundation stone covered over with a bougainvillea creeper. There is no gainsaying the fact that within the House there is a marked lack of accommodation, and if the Government should decide to extend Parliament House, as a part of the centenary celebrations, everybody concerned will be very pleased.

The PREMIER: We have had an estimate made of the cost of completing the building, and a second estimate made of the cost of erecting one wing at this end.

It is a matter that will be considered by the Government within the next week or so, when the Loan Estimates are being prepared.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Treasury, £20,595:*

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The Treasurer's departments embrace the Treasury, Audit, Compassionate Allowances, State Savings Bank, Government Stores, Taxation, Workers' Homes Board, Miscellaneous, Services, State Accident Insurance Office and the Council of Industrial Development. I take it that under Standing Order 386A, it is open to us to have a general discussion on this Vote. This afternoon some members tried to have a general discussion on each division, which is not in order. It is only in order to have a general discussion on the departments controlled by one Minister. These are all controlled by the Treasurer, so I take it Standing Order 386A permits of a general discussion before we proceed to the consideration of the items. I notice that later in the Estimates we get the Forests Department.

The CHAIRMAN: That is in another division.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, but it is under the same Minister. When we come to it, I will take the opportunity to make a few remarks on forestry generally.

The Premier: That will be separate.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I only want to make it clear that we can now have the general discussion we desire.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Audit, £11,410:*

Item—Chief Inspector: £672:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Auditor General, of course, is subject to Parliament, not to the Minister. That should be made clear. It is open to any member of the House to approach the Auditor General. We can all go to him, for he is an officer of Parliament. During the last few days one or two questions have been asked in the House, and I think it should be more generally understood that the Auditor General is an officer of Parlia-

ment, and so is as much an officer of individual members as he is of the Premier.

The Premier: Yes, he is not an officer of mine.

Mr. Davy: If he were to do anything wrong, could you not carpet him?

The Premier: No, he comes under a special Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, although his staff is subject to the Public Service Commissioner.

The Premier: It is an anomalous position.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is. The staff ought to be the servants of Parliament. The Public Service Commissioner fixes their salaries, but he has no further control.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is pretty good control in itself.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If it were not so, probably they would not be as well off as they are. The point is that while we have no right to go to any departmental official, we have a right to go to the Auditor General. We have always had that right, and we have it still. The Auditor General's report for last year has not been discussed very much in the House, and now we have his report for this year, which will have to be discussed when we have had time to digest it. Meanwhile, I do not think we can object very much to items that appear in this Vote. They are much the same as they were last year and there has been very little increase in the expenditure, so we ought to be satisfied.

Mr. THOMSON: In accordance with the established custom of the House, and with a desire to obtain information from the Auditor General, I asked the Premier, as Leader of the House, if he would request the Auditor General to indicate to the House what, in his opinion, is the correct amount that should be charged to public salaries on revenue account, as per his criticism on page 38 of his report of 1927. I know we have a perfect right to go to the Auditor General ourselves, but I ask members what would have been my position had I gone to the Auditor General and privately asked him that question.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is not a private matter.

Mr. THOMSON: At all events, I took a straightforward course in asking that the House should be officially notified through

the Leader of the House, and I regret that I did not receive a satisfactory reply.

The Premier: You got a perfectly courteous reply.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, I got a perfectly courteous reply. But when earlier in the session we asked when the Auditor General's report would be available, the Premier did not then think it beneath his position to pass the question on to the Auditor General and get the reply that it would be available about the middle of October.

The Premier: That was quite a different matter.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think so. We are faced with a very peculiar position in the House. The Auditor General, who is our auditor, submits to us his digest of the financial revenue and expenditure for the past 12 months.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member is not going to discuss the Auditor General's report.

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with the Auditor General's department.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will not be allowed to discuss the Auditor General's report.

Mr. THOMSON: I will discuss his department.

The CHAIRMAN: The Auditor General is under a special Act, and his report cannot be discussed on this item.

Mr. THOMSON: Am I to understand that we cannot discuss the Auditor General's report on this item?

The CHAIRMAN: That is so. The items of the Vote can be discussed, but the Auditor General is under a special Act.

Mr. THOMSON: But the report that he has submitted—

The CHAIRMAN: I have given my ruling. If the hon. member cannot accept it, he must move to disagree with it.

Mr. THOMSON: But surely to goodness—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must accept my ruling or move to disagree with it. I am not going to allow the Auditor General's report to be discussed on this item. The hon. member can move to disagree with my ruling, and get the Speaker's ruling.

*[Dissent from Ruling.]*

Mr. Thomson: Very well. I move—

That the Committee dissents from the Chairman's ruling.

It seems to me we are all very much afraid of discussing anything.

Mr. Marshall: On a point of order. I take exception to that remark. It is a reflection upon the Chair.

The Chairman: Order! The Chair is perfectly well able to look after itself.

*[The Speaker took the Chair.]*

The Chairman reported the dissent.

Mr. Thomson: I requested certain information from the Premier by way of a question and received a reply that the Government could not prefer a request of the kind to the Auditor General. Then I asked how the information could be obtained. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that the Auditor General was an officer of this House and that every member was entitled to visit him and obtain information. I was endeavouring to show that I had adopted the straightforward method of asking for the information to be supplied to the House by the Auditor General, but as I was proceeding on those lines the Chairman of Committees ruled me out of order—

The Premier: That is not the position.

Mr. Thomson: —and said I could not discuss the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Panton: That is so.

Mr. Thomson: The officers of the department prepared the report.

The Premier: It is the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Panton: In support of my ruling I pointed out that we were dealing with a sub-department and not with a department. No salary is shown in the Estimates for the Auditor General because he comes under a special Act. If the hon. member were allowed to discuss the Auditor General's report under a division that deals with the salaries of his officers, there is nothing to show that any of his officers had anything to do with the report.

Mr. Thomson: Then how is the report prepared?

Mr. Panton: The Auditor General's report has nothing to do with the items, and if a discussion were allowed on the report, members need not discuss the Estimates at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It seems to me we can discuss the work of any department; otherwise it would be futile merely to argue that Mr. Brown receives £400 and should get more or less. All the evening we have been discussing the work of various depart-



ments, and the report in question is the work of the Auditor General's department.

Mr. Marshall: What does the Auditor General get under this division?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is work to be done in the Auditor General's Department or there would be no staff. Surely we can discuss the work of the chief inspector and say the report is the result of his work, which it is. The member for Menzies, who is so wise now, will probably discuss fares and freights to Cue on the Railway Estimates.

Mr. Panton: Only during the general discussion on the department.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no doubt the Auditor General's report can be discussed at this stage.

The Premier: This question has often arisen in years past, and it seems to me entirely beyond doubt that the Auditor General's report cannot be discussed under this division. His report is a document dealing with the finances of the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We make provision in the Estimates so that the report can be prepared.

The Premier: To suggest that if the office boy were under discussion a member could read a report dealing with the finances of the State and having nothing at all to do with the office boy is untenable. There is nothing in the report that has to do with any item in the division.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What does the chief inspector do?

The Premier: We cannot assume that the Auditor General's report is a report by the 32 officials in the department. It would be going from the sublime to the ridiculous to permit discussion of the Auditor General's report dealing with the financial operations of the State under an item for an office boy.

Hon. G. Taylor: The member for Katanning desired to discuss the Auditor General's report, and read a question he had submitted to the House, the answer to which he deemed unsatisfactory. The Leader of the Opposition and other members pointed out that the Auditor General was a servant of Parliament, and inferred that he was a servant of this House. The Auditor General is a servant of both Houses. The Leader of the Opposition said that any member was at liberty to discuss matters of finance with the Auditor General. That is correct, but

I do not see how discussion of the Auditor General's report can be permitted on the item now being considered. I should like to remove the hazy idea that this is the Parliament of Western Australia. It is only one branch of the legislature; it takes both Houses to make Parliament and the Auditor General is a servant of both Houses. The member for Katanning should have moved a substantive motion ordering the Auditor General to answer certain questions to Parliament, and he would then have sent his communication to Mr. Speaker, who would have read it to the House. The Auditor General is not under the control of the Government, and it is to be hoped he never will be.

Mr. Panton: That has nothing to do with the question.

Hon. G. Taylor: Unless there is something in the report with the items under discussion, the hon. member is not in order in reading it.

The Premier: There is nothing in the report bearing on these items.

Hon. G. Taylor: So far as I am aware, there is not.

Mr. Speaker: Generally great freedom is permitted when discussing the Estimates. If the hon. member had taken a proper opportunity, all points dealing with the Treasurer could have been discussed under the general heading.

Hon. G. Taylor: I pointed that out.

Mr. Speaker: That stage, however, has been passed, and though members are permitted to speak more than once on the items, they must confine themselves to the item under discussion. The item under discussion is No. 1 relating to the chief inspector and under that heading no other matter can be discussed. Even under the general heading of Audit Department it would be entirely irrelevant and out of order for a member to drag in a matter entirely foreign to the item in the sense that it is not included in the item. As the Premier pointed out, it is an altogether unwarranted assumption that the Auditor General has not prepared his own report and that he has submitted it to everyone in his department. Perhaps he has obtained information from every officer in the department, but it is his report. The item under discussion is not the Auditor-General's report, but Item No. 1 on the Estimates, under the heading of "Audit."

Consequently I must uphold the Chairman's ruling.

*Committee resumed.*

Mr. THOMSON: I move—

That the item be reduced by £50.

I move this as a protest against the action of the department in submitting a report that does not contain the information desired by members. This is the only means available to me of moving a vote of censure upon the officer in question for failing to supply the Committee with the fullest information. It has been shown that a greater proportion of interest has been charged up to loan than should have been charged.

The PREMIER: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member is discussing the amount charged either to loan or to revenue. That has no relationship to the salary of this officer. That is due to action on the part of the Government. To attempt to make relevant a discussion upon loan and revenue charges under this item is even more disorderly than the attempt that was made with regard to the Auditor-General's report.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is out of order. He is unable to deal with the Auditor-General's report on this item.

Mr. THOMSON: We are paying this officer a salary of £672. I am entitled to move for a reduction of the item.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, but not to discuss the Auditor General's report.

Mr. THOMSON: I am entitled to give my reason for moving the amendment.

The Premier: If the reasons are relevant.

Mr. THOMSON: One would look rather foolish if one moved such an amendment without giving any reasons. If we cannot discuss the action of the officers under the Auditor-General, we are only wasting the time of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can discuss a reduction of the officer's salary, but is not permitted to discuss the Auditor-General's report or the financial policy of the Government. The officer in question is not responsible for either.

Mr. THOMSON: Why are we paying this officer?

The CHAIRMAN: I am not in a position to answer that question.

Mr. THOMSON: We are paying out £14,440 for the salaries of these officers.

The Premier: On this item?

Mr. THOMSON: For the whole of the department.

The Premier: But we are dealing with this item.

Mr. THOMSON: Are we not discussing the total sum of £14,000?

The CHAIRMAN: No. Members are discussing the reduction of the Chief Inspector's salary.

Mr. THOMSON: I have moved to that effect. Am I not permitted to give my reasons for taking such a step?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can give as many reasons as he likes, so long as he is in order.

Mr. THOMSON: The information supplied to the Chamber is not very satisfactory. If I endeavour to express an opinion the Premier will rise to a point of order.

Mr. Corboy: How do you know this officer is responsible?

Mr. THOMSON: How does the hon. member know he is not responsible? We know he has much to do with the preparation of the report as the Auditor-General.

Mr. Corboy: How do you know that?

Mr. THOMSON: How does the hon. member know to the contrary?

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

The Minister for Railways: It is not his job.

Mr. THOMSON: Why are we paying him £672 a year if it is not his job? No one here can give us the information we want. Apparently no one has any control over the Audit Department, although its officers are servants of Parliament. When we ask for information we are blocked on every side, and prevented from doing our duty. The only course open to me will be to move a special motion in the House for the discussion of the Auditor-General's report.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the only proper course to take.

Mr. THOMSON: If so, why are we asked to pass this sum of £14,000? The Premier, when on this side of the House, repeatedly stated that apparently members had to be satisfied with whatever information Ministers desired to give them. He himself is putting that policy into practice.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Premier: I rise to a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already called the hon. member to order. He is getting away from the amendment.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I support the amendment. According to the ruling that has been given, we should have discussed the Auditor-General's report when the Estimates were dealt with as a whole. How in the devil could we discuss the report when we had not got it? For years members have urged that this report should be brought down before the presentation of the Estimates. It is time Parliament told these officers that they have certain duties to perform in this matter, so that members may be able properly to analyse the Estimates. If they are properly carrying out their functions, these officers should furnish the report in time. If this motion is carried, it will bring it home to the Auditor-General as well as his chief inspector that they must see that the report is supplied to Parliament before the Estimates are brought down.

Mr. Davy: On the other hand, the Government should not bring down the Estimates until they have received the Auditor-General's report.

Hon. W. J. GEORGE: I blame other Governments as well. For years past we have not had the report until a discussion upon it has been ruled out of order.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I hope the hon. member will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Thomson: I am going to put my protest on record.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It is an unfortunate method of protest.

The Premier: It is a silly method.

Mr. Thomson: It is the only one available.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It is foolish to attempt to reach a point by reducing the salary of an officer who is not responsible.

The Premier: It is childish.

Hon. W. J. George: How do you know he is not responsible?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It is not the proper method, and I cannot support the hon. member. I fail to see how he will attain his object by reducing this salary by £50.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DAVY: What is the position of the Auditor-General and his subordinates? The former is a servant of Parliament, and the same thing applies to his assistants. I understand, however, that the Public Service Commissioner thinks he is entitled to carpet the Auditor-General's subordinates for what

he regards as breaches of Public Service regulations. I have always thought that a member of Parliament was entitled to go to the Auditor-General, or with his permission to any of his subordinates, and ask any questions he thought fit.

The Premier: I think he should go to the head, who would then get the information from his officers.

Mr. DAVY: I thought the Auditor-General was perfectly free, or his subordinates, with his permission, to supply any information to any member, and that no one had any right to criticise him or any of his subordinates for giving that information. Is that the correct view?

The Premier: Not quite.

Mr. DAVY: What is the position? If the Auditor-General is not available to give this information, I should be able to go to the Chief Inspector for the same purpose.

The PREMIER: That is not quite correct. The whole of the staff of the Audit Department are under the Public Service Act and regulations. The Auditor General may give permission to one of his staff to supply information to any member of Parliament, but he has not the power to give permission to one of his officers to supply information that is in any way prohibited by the Public Service Act and regulations. Therefore, if any officer of the Audit Department did anything contrary to the Public Service Act or regulations—and there are regulations dealing with the giving of information by officers of the Public Service—then, even although he had the permission of the Auditor-General, he would still be guilty of a breach of the regulations, and could be punished by the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. Davy: Is that right?

The PREMIER: I am not saying that it is right. Perhaps it could be well argued that the staff of the Audit Department should be entirely under the control of the Auditor General. However, it is not so today; the whole of the Audit staff are under the Public Service Commissioner.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They are under the Act, but not subject to the Public Service Commissioner's control.

The PREMIER: They are subject to his control under the Act and regulations.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I can quite understand that it would be necessary for a member of Parliament to approach the

head of the department, the Auditor General himself, or the official acting for him. That is what we are entitled to do, and that is all we need to do. Probably we would not get very useful information if we went to a subordinate member of the staff. I do not think the Public Service Commissioner can control the detail work of any officer of the Public Service.

The Premier: But if any officer broke a regulation, the Public Service Commissioner would deal with him.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the officer would have to be reported to the Public Service Commissioner by the head of the department.

The Premier: Not necessarily by the head of the department.

Mr. Davy: No, and that is the trouble.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think a suspension would be made by the head of the department, and an inquiry held by the Public Service Commissioner. In any case, I cannot see that there is anything to hide in connection with any public department.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Members of Parliament, I understand, are at perfect liberty to ask the Auditor General any question, and he is entitled to answer any question if he thinks it proper for him to answer; and for any action he may take he is responsible neither to the Public Service Commissioner nor anybody else, except Parliament alone. If Parliament thought the Auditor General gave information which was improper for him to give, Parliament would censure him for doing so.

The CHAIRMAN: We are discussing the Chief Inspector, and not the Auditor General.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I do not think it would be wise to allow any subordinate of the Auditor General, even the Chief Inspector, to answer questions on behalf of the Auditor General without his knowing anything about it.

Mr. DAVY: I suggest that the Audit Department, the head and all the officers, should be regarded as belonging to us, and as subject to no right of criticism by any other human being. The present position, I understand, is not so. The Auditor General cannot be interfered with by anybody except Parliament, but apparently his subordinates are considered by the Public Service Commissioner to be under him.

The Premier: They are.

Mr. DAVY: I think they are, in law; and I submit that that is wrong. Any member of Parliament ought to be allowed to go to the Audit Department and see anybody he likes, and ask anything he likes, and the only person to criticise him should be the Auditor General himself, who might say, "It is discourteous for you to go to one of my officers; you should come to me." I ask the Premier to agree with me in that view. Obviously, the Auditor General should be entitled to know what is going on in his department. The incident I refer to is that a subordinate—I believe it is the officer we are now discussing—gave certain information in the temporary absence of the Auditor General, and was carpented for so doing by the Public Service Commissioner.

The Premier: For breach of the regulation.

Mr. DAVY: I submit that that is absolute rubbish.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Who moved the Auditor General?

Mr. DAVY: The Public Service Commissioner was within the strict letter of the law, but I consider he did not show much discretion, because the spirit of the thing is that the only man who should be permitted to criticise the subordinates of a man who is our servant is that man himself. I would ask the Premier to tell the Committee that he will put this officer in a completely independent position with regard to anybody in the world except the Auditor General.

Mr. SAMPSON: If the Public Service Commissioner did not take steps when he considered them necessary, he would be open to censure.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. SAMPSON: It might be open at a later stage to bring down a measure amending the present system.

Item—Examiners of accounts, £840:

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that I can discuss this matter only by moving—

That the item be reduced by £40.

We cannot discuss the Auditor General himself, since his appointment is by statute. The examiners of accounts, when submitting their reports to the Auditor General, should have indicated to him the correct amount to be charged in the matter

concerning which I am making inquiries. From my point of view the examiners have been negligent inasmuch as, after examining the accounts of the Public Works Department and making certain statements as to too much being charged against one section, they did not state the proper charge to be made against revenue.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Compassionate Allowances, £1,907—agreed to.*

*Vote—State Savings Bank, £52,539:*

Mr. ANGELO: Has the Treasurer protested in any way to the Prime Minister against what, if I were allowed by the Standing Orders to do so, I would call the damnably unfair treatment of Western Australia by the Federal Government in their attempt to collar the deposits from our State Savings Bank? Hon. members will be aware that lately an advertisement has appeared increasing the rate of interest on deposits in the Commonwealth Savings Bank, which is in competition with—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member may not discuss that matter on the item before the Chair.

Mr. ANGELO: I suggest that the manager of the State Savings Bank take steps to meet this unfair competition. The other day I asked the Premier if he could give me the figures showing the deposits with the Commonwealth Savings Bank and the advances made. We were told that the bank had £5,000,000 worth of deposits in the State, but the Premier could not give me any figures regarding advances made. He suggested I could obtain that information from the bank. I saw the manager of the Commonwealth Bank and he promised to let me have them, but I have not yet received the particulars.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The statistician gets those figures every month.

Mr. ANGELO: Not the advances. According to what I have been told elsewhere, the advances made by the Commonwealth do not represent 50 per cent. of the deposits. That indicates that the Commonwealth Bank is taking an unfair advantage of the people of this State.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must confine himself to the Vote.

Mr. ANGELO: I suggest that the Premier should ask the manager of the State Savings Bank to protest against the unfair attitude of the Commonwealth Bank. It is only fair to the State that money saved by the people here and lodged in the Commonwealth Bank, shall be utilised in the development of the State and not be taken outside the State.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—Government Stores, £17,029; Taration, £30,000; Workers' Homes Board, £17,851—agreed to.*

*Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £435,446:*

Item—Refunds of revenue not otherwise provided for £13,000:

Mr. ANGELO: What does this item refer to?

The PREMIER: It is to provide for refunds of amounts collected by the Taxation Department in excess of the tax assessed.

Item—Interest and Exchange, £30,000:

Mr. ANGELO: Last year the vote was £40,000 and £64,000 was expended. This year the Estimate is £30,000 and that, according to the printed Estimates, represents a decrease of £4,908. There seems to be something wrong with those details.

The PREMIER: This item refers to interest on bank overdraft on Government accounts in this State, in the Eastern States and also in London. It includes some small exchanges on remittances. The decreased expenditure is accounted for by the decreased interest it is anticipated will have to be paid on the London overdraft, on account of the overdraft having been reduced by a £3,000,000 loan raised towards the end of the last financial year.

Item—Railway Advisory Board, £100:

Mr. THOMSON: The vote seems very small for the purposes of a body like the Railway Advisory Board.

The PREMIER: The vote is quite sufficient. The members are salaried officers and the vote covers the expenses incidental to the travelling the board undertakes from time to time.

Item—Acroplane landing ground, Marble Bar, £ for £ up to £125, £125:

Mr. THOMPSON: Have the Government taken any steps to provide landing grounds for aeroplanes in other parts of the State, particularly in view of the progress of aviation in these days?

The PREMIER: We have not taken any steps generally under that heading, but if a request is made for assistance to provide landing grounds in various parts of the State, we will deal with each application on its merits. There is no part of the State more entitled to assistance under this heading than the outer parts of the North. In this instance, the town is off the ordinary aviation route and the provision of a landing ground at Marble Bar will enable aeroplanes to land there in the event of serious illness necessitating the transfer of a patient to a centre where medical attention can be received.

*[Mr. Lutey took the Chair.]*

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: On the recognised aviation routes, the Federal Government provide the landing places.

The PREMIER: Yes, but Marble Bar is not on a recognised route. The residents desire to have a landing ground and have provided the major portion of the money required.

Mr. THOMSON: When the Federal Treasurer was in the Katanning district recently, a request was made to him for assistance in providing a landing ground, but Dr. Earle Page stated that that was a function of the State Government. I wish to ascertain whether the Government are making provision for landing grounds in areas that may be surveyed in the future. Aviation is here to stay and I think the Government should make provision for landing grounds in any newly opened-up areas.

Item—Federal State Finance proposals. amount to be placed in suspense until agreement becomes binding by law and then to be appropriated, £350,000.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: When the Premier was dealing with the Financial Agreement, he told the House that £427,550 would be saved to the State under the terms of the agreement. We know he set aside £150,000 the year before last, £350,000 last year and now a further £350,000 has been provided, making a total of £850,000 in all. If the Financial Agree-

ment should not be passed, we shall have to make good, not £800,000, but something over £1,000,000. Is the £350,000 as much as we should have paid to the London trustees?

The Premier: That is the amount we should have paid.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course we may have paid off some of the loans since the Premier made his earlier statement. If the correct amount were £427,000, the provision made shows that there will be a difference of £77,000.

The Premier: There is some explanation for that. I cannot give it to you at the moment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In 1927 it would appear that the amount, according to the Auditor-General, was £154,000, but we set aside £150,000 only. When he persuaded us to accept the Financial Agreement Bill, the Premier told us that £427,000 less would be paid into the sinking funds for the trustees in London. Probably some loans have matured since then, but I would like the Premier, if he cannot tell me the position now, to let me know later on if the £350,000 is the correct amount.

The Premier: Yes, that is the correct amount.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, it does not tally.

The Premier: As I have already indicated to you, there is an explanation of that position, but I cannot give it to you at the moment. I was dealing with the Financial Agreement when I made the earlier statement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, the Premier's statement must have been correct at the time, and unless there has been some amount paid off since, it should still be correct. If it is right, it means that we have set aside £77,000 too little for the year. This is a serious matter. It is a very serious part of our work for the year, and £77,000 is a big amount. I shall be glad if the Premier will look into it and give us an explanation subsequently.

The Premier: Very well, I will.

Mr. Angelo: Can we not postpone this item?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is not necessary. The Premier will look into it and let us know.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—State Accident Insurance Office, £3,559:*

*Item—Allowances to Government Actuary £300, and Deputy Registrar-General £150, and proportion of Registrar-General's Department salaries chargeable to State Accident Insurance Office £132, £582:*

Mr. LINDSAY: On the general debate I took exception to this being here at all. In order to express my disapproval I move an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £100.

I do not think I can move to delete the whole Vote.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You can vote against it.

Mr. LINDSAY: I intend to do so, but in the meantime I mean to reduce it by £100. On two occasions the Government have brought down to the House Bills authorising the establishment of State insurance, and both Bills were defeated. Nevertheless, we find on the Estimates this Vote for State insurance.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I take it the hon. member is moving his amendment by way of expressing his disapproval of the Government carrying on State insurance.

Mr. Lindsay: That is right.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Because the Government have no legal authority to carry on State insurance. I do not think this is the proper place for the amendment. The total at the bottom of the column, in other words the whole Vote, is where the amendment should be moved. However, there is no possible chance of carrying the amendment, for this is part of the Government's policy. State insurance is against the law of the land, but the Government are strong enough to carry it on. There is another place that could deal with this on the Appropriation Bill.

The Premier: Why make such a suggestion?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Another place have twice refused the Government authority to carry on State insurance. Still, another place have not done their duty for they have neglected to say to the Government, "If you insist upon doing this illegal thing, we will not pass your Appropriation Bill."

Mr. Thomson: We will see that your remarks are noted.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I hope they are noted in another place. It is quite in order for the hon. member, with a view to testing the question, to move to reduce the whole item by £100.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us wipe out the lot, not reduce it.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I do not know that this is the proper place for the amendment. I would prefer to see it moved on the total amount.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like to know from the Premier why this item is so much less this year than it was last year, when it was set down at £890. This year it is only £583. I understand there is an officer in charge of this department, the Government Actuary.

The CHAIRMAN: I think we had better deal with the amendment before the Chair.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But before I agree to reduce the item still further, I want to know how it is it has been reduced by so much already. Surely I am entitled to know that, in order that I may determine whether I should vote for a further reduction. If this is to cover the salaries of three officials, I can only say I do not believe in sweating anybody. If the hon. member has moved his amendment merely in order to express his disapproval of the Government carrying on State insurance, we should strike out the Vote altogether. I must protest against this illegal act on the part of the Government. There was no special reason why this office had to be set up when it was. The Government ignored the law of the land. We ought to resent the continuance by the Government of this State Insurance Office. Last year Parliament rejected the Bill to authorise State insurance, despite which we are now asked to vote a sum for its maintenance. If the object of this amendment be to reduce the amount paid to the officials doing the work, it would not be right to support it; but if the object be to protest against the illegal act of the Government, we should be quite justified in supporting it. However, since the Premier has already reduced this amount by some £300, it would be helpful to know how he managed to do it.

Mr. ANGELO: I suggest to the member for Toodyay that he withdraw his amendment, and further that he does not ask for any reduction of the total amount. Because if the amendment were carried it would be tantamount to saying that we agree to the

passing of a lesser sum. All those against this illegal act by the Government should vote against the whole Vote and ask for a division, so that it may be recorded in "Hansard" that we do not lend our countenance to this thing at all. I suggest the amendment be withdrawn, and that we oppose the total Vote.

Mr. LINDSAY: It was not my intention to reduce the salary of any officer. My amendment was intended as a protest. It was remarkable that when the Bill was introduced into the House—

The CHAIRMAN: That cannot be discussed on this item.

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not wish to do anything to reduce any officer's salary. My only desire is to protest against the Government carrying on State insurance after the Bill to authorise State insurance has been rejected.

The Premier: Notwithstanding that the people of the country endorsed it.

Mr. LINDSAY: That may be, but on two occasions Parliament rejected it.

The Premier: The House that represents the people passed it twice, but the House that does not represent the people refused to pass it.

Mr. LINDSAY: I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I still want to know from the Premier why this item has been reduced.

The PREMIER: This item represents allowances to Government Actuary £300, and Deputy Registrar General £150, and proportion of Registrar General's Department salaries chargeable to State Accident Insurance Office £132, or a total of £582. As the hon. member has pointed out, there is shown here a decrease of £308. The item represents allowances of £300 and £150 payable to the Government Actuary and Deputy Registrar General respectively. The balance of the amount, namely £132, represents the sum to be rebated to the salaries Vote of the Registrar General's Department. The amount is considerably reduced on account of an adjustment having been made in the Registrar Generals Department's salaries rebated from the State Accident Insurance Office.

Item—Medical Officer, £852:

Mr. ANGELO: I should like to ask the Premier what will be the functions of this officer.

The PREMIER: This item represents a new appointment, and is the salary payable to the medical officer engaged to examine claimants under the Workers' Compensation Act, and applicants for employment with the Railway Department. The Railway Department bears half the cost. The medical officer is to deal with the work of the Railway Department and also the work of the State Insurance Office, and the salary is to be divided between them. In the past, railway employees supplied certificates from private doctors. Now the medical officer will examine and certify in respect of railway employees. He is a salaried man.

Mr. Angelo: Does not the Workers' Compensation Act allow a claimant to go to his own doctor?

The PREMIER: Yes, but there must be some check on the private doctor. This officer will also do the work for the State Insurance Department. That is why this amount is provided here.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Who is this medical officer?

The Premier: I understand he has only just been appointed.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: But is he a Western Australian man?

The Premier: I am not sure that the appointment has yet been made. It has been considered, but I do not think it has yet been completed.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: This item is set apart for that officer, when appointed? I understand you have called for applications, but the appointment has not yet been definitely made.

The Premier: It is in the hands of the Medical Department.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Am I to understand that the amount given here represents his annual salary?

The Premier: Yes. He will be a permanent officer.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: At £852. That is for the 12 months?

The Premier: Yes, for the whole of the 12 months.

Mr. ANGELO: In addition to paying the medical man's salary, the office will have to pay the claimants' medical men, but it will be an advantage not only to the State



office but to all insurance offices to have a medical man to check the unfair charges made by a certain section of the medical fraternity. He will be able to examine the accounts of some of the medical men who have been making a welter of their charges. The Act allows £100 for medical expenses and I have seen numbers of bills that have got up as high as £98 and £99.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If it is the law of the land, the better plan would be to alter the law.

Mr. ANGELO: I was hopeful that the Government would bring down an amending Bill to prevent that sort of thing. If the new medical man does his job and expresses his opinion on the bills submitted by some of the cormorant doctors, the appointment will be warranted—that is, provided the State insurance office is a legally constituted department.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Is it intended that this medical officer shall examine only railway employees?

The Minister for Justice: A railway employee who becomes sick will have to go to him for a certificate.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It will not affect workers' compensation as regards the gold-fields?

The Minister for Justice: No.

Item—Allowance to Mine Workers' Relief Fund, £450:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: If it is intended to divide the Committee on the vote, it may be said that anyone voting in favour of the item will be in favour of the Government carrying on the State Insurance Office illegally. On the other hand, if we do not allow the Government to carry on until they get an Act of Parliament, we shall be imposing a hardship on the people. The Government said they established a State Accident Insurance Office because Parliament had passed a measure compelling people to insure employees, and the employers could not insure some men, as private companies would not take the risk. While I would not support the Government in any illegal act, I do not think I would be doing right if I voted against the division. The Government should bring down another Bill, and if another place throws it out, they can make provision in the Appropriation Bill to carry on as before. I do not want the

Government to carry on illegally, but I do not wish to see them put in a deplorable position.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is remarkable that the Government should be carrying on this office although they have no statutory authority to do so.

The Premier: We are discussing an item at present.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: While I agree with the item, we have no authority to pass it seeing there is no legislation to authorise the vote. The only way in which provision can be made, I think, is under compassionate allowances.

The Premier: If this vote is knocked out, I will recommit the compassionate allowances section.

Vote put and declared passed.

Division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: There was only one voice against the vote.

Mr Thomson: There was more than one voice.

The CHAIRMAN: I heard only one voice—that of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Thomson: More than one member called "no."

Mr. Lindsay: Certainly more than one called "no."

The CHAIRMAN: Very well; ring the bells.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The division is on the total vote.

Mr. Thomson: We are voting against the continuance of an illegal act.

Mr. Marshall: You have to obey instructions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I rise on a point of order to object to the remark of the member for Murchison.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order. I cannot take notice of what is said when the bells are ringing for a division.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then members can say what they like. The Chairman should protect the Committee.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	..	10
					—
Majority for	..				8
					—

## AMES.

Mr. Chesson  
Mr. Clydesdale  
Mr. Collier  
Mr. Coverley  
Mr. Cunningham  
Miss Holman  
Mr. Kenneally  
Mr. Lamond  
Mr. Marshall

Mr. McCallum  
Mr. Munsie  
Mr. Panton  
Mr. Rowe  
Mr. Sleeman  
Mr. A. Wansbrough  
Mr. Wilcock  
Mr. Withers  
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

## NOMS.

Mr. Angelo  
Mr. Davy  
Mr. Lindsay  
Sir James Mitchell  
Mr. Richardson

Mr. Sampson  
Mr. J. M. Smith  
Mr. Teesdale  
Mr. Thomson  
Mr. J. H. Smith

(Teller.)

Vote thus passed.

*Vote—Council of Industrial Development, £1,215—agreed to.*

This concluded the Estimates of the Treasurer.

Department of Forests (Hon. P. Collier, Minister).

*Vote—Forests, £24,445:*

**MR. PANTON** (Menzies) [9.55]: I understand we are allowed to discuss sundry matters before we deal with the items. I wish to speak on the question of sandalwood and to make an appeal to the Minister to give some assistance to the prospectors who are pulling sandalwood. According to the report of the department, 4,829 tons of wood valued at £147,426 was exported last year and 50,371 lbs. of oil was exported. Since the agreement under which sandalwood pullers are working was made five years ago, the wood has been getting scarcer every year and the pullers have to go much farther out for it. I venture to say there is no sandalwood being pulled on Crown lands nearer than 70 to 100 miles from a railway. That should be taken into consideration when the price of the wood is fixed. The timber was much dearer when the agreement fixed the rate at £16 per ton, and while I realise that we are not likely to get more than £16, plus the royalty, making the price at Fremantle for f.a.q. wood £25 a ton, the fact remains that a large revenue is being obtained from sandalwood. The men who have been and are now pulling sandalwood under the agreement are put to greatly increased cost to land the wood at the railway.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have always had to go a long way out for it.

**MR. PANTON**: Not so far as they have to go now. I am not worrying so much about the regular sandalwood getter as about the prospector. The sandalwood getter is equipped with a truck and carts his own wood. I wish to speak for the prospector. I have quite a sheaf of correspondence from the Prospectors' Association on the subject. Before a prospector can get his 12-ton order, which is the maximum for a prospector, he must give a guarantee that he will do six months' prospecting during the year. In order to go out 70 or 80 miles to get the wood, he has to buy a horse and feed it, and cart at least two tanks of water.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Surely he has to have that equipment for prospecting!

**MR. PANTON**: No; there are scores of men prospecting in and around places along the railway line. There is any number of prospectors at Comet Vale, Paddington and Menzies—men of the type that made Western Australia famous.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You said, any number of them.

**MR. PANTON**: There is any number of them. It would not matter if there was only one. He would be entitled to justice.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, any amount of justice would be all right, but any number of men would be wrong.

**MR. PANTON**: Anything so long as the hon. member allows me to go on.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not want to stop you.

**MR. PANTON**: I do not think the hon. member is quite au fait with this matter. He seems to think that a prospector is a man who is without a horse and cart. The prospector must have a horse if he is to go out 80 miles, and take out his own water. It is impossible for him to cart 12 tons of sandalwood without a horse and cart.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do you want to move that he shall get more than £16?

**MR. PANTON**: I am not in a position to do that: I am relying on getting some assistance from the Premier. The prospector does not get £16 for his sandalwood. In the first place, 12½ per cent. is deducted for roots. I am informed by the secretary of the association that this deduction is made whether there are any roots or not. If that is so, there must be some-

thing wrong. The prospector is, therefore, actually getting £15 10s. for his sandalwood at Fremantle up to that stage. The railage from Menzies is a minimum of £2 10s. but from Cane Grass North it is £2 14s. 6d. per ton.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is the same price from all stations.

Mr. PANTON: From Cane Grass South it is £2 10s., but from the North it is £2 14s. 6d. The prospector cannot cart his own sandalwood. It has to be transported by motor lorry. Either he goes fifty-fifty with the owner or driver of the lorry after cleaning the wood, or he pays the ruling rate for carting, 1s. 6d. per ton per mile. On a conservative estimate the average distance the prospector has to send his wood is 70 miles. That means he has to pay £5 5s. per ton to get the wood to the railway, and then a freight of £2 14s. 6d.

Mr. Teesdale: Is it 1s. 6d. per ton per mile?

Mr. PANTON: From Wiluna to Leonora it is cheaper, because in that case there is big back-loading.

Mr. Teesdale: I know where the carting has been done over hundreds of miles for 1s. per ton per mile.

Mr. PANTON: I do not know what the charges are further north. Those must be cases where there is big back-loading and the work is done cheaper in consequence. A tremendous lot of the sandalwood comes from my district, where the rate is 1s. 6d. In the Mt. Margaret district the rate is the same on the average.

Mr. Teesdale: Perhaps they have to cut their own tracks there.

Mr. PANTON: No tracks are cut where the sandalwood is found. On the two items I have mentioned there is a deduction of £7 19s. 6d. from the £15 10s. per ton. The time has arrived when the Minister for Forests should review the price to the sandalwood prospectors. These men are battling way in the outback country, and some of them have not seen the city for years. The fact that they receive an order for 12 tons of sandalwood precludes them from getting any sustenance from the Mines Department. They cannot then get the £1 per week sustenance, and are entirely dependent upon the proceeds of the 12 tons of sandalwood they are allowed to get during

the remaining six months of the year. It would be a pretty good spot where a man could get together his 12 tons of sandalwood and clean it in less than six or eight weeks. Sandalwood does not grow thickly out there.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He would do very well if he did it then.

Mr. PANTON: If the wood is in good order, the getter receives only the difference between £15 10s. and £7 19s. 6d. I do not suppose there is any chance of increasing the price to the merchant, but I do consider the Ministry should consider the question of giving these men a rebate out of the £9 per ton royalty. They have a hard and a lonely job.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They used to do it for £11 a ton.

Mr. PANTON: The men who got that had other work to do. The sandalwooder who gets his 25 or 30 tons can then take a contract for fencing or well-sinking. He is not so dependent upon the industry as the prospector is. Last year 185 prospectors obtained orders, and these are the men for whom I am appealing. I do not agree with the member for Mt. Margaret that no association is needed for them. The merchants consider it desirable to have their associations, and surely the prospectors are entitled to have some organisation to look after their interests.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The price is fixed for them.

Mr. PANTON: It is good enough for the merchants to have an organisation. By combining, the sandalwooders can appoint their own representative on the board. That board has been a wonderful help to the department.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So long as too much is not charged to come in.

Mr. PANTON: One of the members of the board is Mr. Telfer, of the Mines Department. He has a good idea of those who have been prospecting. The genuine prospector is the man who is entitled to the order. The secretary, Mr. McParlin, represents the prospectors, and Mr. Brockway, the ranger, represents the Forests Department. These men are au fait with the position. They mingle with the prospectors and know which men are entitled to get the orders. That is the principal reason why they are associated with the board.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would not limit the orders to those who join the association?

Mr. PANTON: There is no preference given to members. I do not suggest anything of the kind.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be scandalous if it were so.

Mr. PANTON: Two of the members of the board are Government officials. There is no such thing as preference in this case.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Government officials see that there is preference to unionists.

Mr. PANTON: The men combine for their own protection. I do not know much about the association. Its members are scattered all over the State.

Hon. G. Taylor: They never meet as a body.

Mr. PANTON: It would be impossible for them to do so without spending a lot of money in meeting at one centre.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is no use paying for membership of the association out of their hard earnings.

Mr. PANTON: What they have decided for themselves is not my concern. The time has arrived when the whole matter should be reviewed. This year the State is deriving £57,000 from the industry, which is an important one. Furthermore, we have exported this year 50,371 lbs. of oil. This alone shows that the industry is growing rapidly. The men who are doing the actual hard work of pulling the timber should be given consideration. I hope the matter will receive the Premier's attention. I have been bombarded with requests to arrange for a deputation to the Premier, but I hope the trouble can be adjusted without incurring the expense of bringing a number of men to Perth.

**HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL** (Northam) [10.12]: I would warn the Premier to be mighty careful in touching this business. I touched it once, and got into trouble over it. The hon. gentleman will be well advised to take warning from my experience. If he tries to make the position better for these workers, he will be attacked from his own side of the Chamber. I found the men getting £9 per ton at Fremantle, as compared with the £16 which the member for Menzies says is not enough. The agreement was made just before my Government

left office. I feel hurt even now about happenings in connection with the so-called sandalwood scandal, which was talked about all over the State. In my opinion the attack on the sandalwood agreement was one of the worst things that ever happened in the political history of Western Australia. The men were getting £7 per ton after paying freight and royalty, and we put them up to £16 less the freight, thus doubling their wages. Then people were told throughout the State that there was a sandalwood scandal and ramp, and that somebody had been bribed to put up the price. The story was believed, and it helped to put the present Government where they are. Whenever I was asked about sandalwood during the election campaign, my reply was, "If I could double your wages, I would do so. I did so in the case of the sandalwood getters, but unfortunately in your case I cannot do so." If the Premier touches the business, he will be told by his own side that he is in league with pickpockets, scoundrels and thieves. Perhaps if hon. members opposite will admit that that was purely an electioneering cry, the Premier might venture to attempt to improve the conditions of the men; but he will have to be mighty careful. If the agreement was bad when made, five years ago, it cannot be good today; nevertheless it is still kept in force. The member for Menzies suggests that the prospectors getting sandalwood should be given something out of the £9 royalty. He did not say how much.

Mr. Panton: I did not like to say, lest the Premier should faint.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would like to get a bit of my own back in connection with sandalwood. People who cannot be accurate, truthful and honest should not be in politics. Those who made the outcry about the sandalwood contract were not honest. If they were honest and deceived, they could apologise even at this late hour. Some people think such things can happen and be forgotten, but this thing will never be forgotten so far as I am concerned. Workmen were never so well treated under any contract as under the sandalwood contract, and yet we were abused from Dan to Beersheba and political advantage was derived from the abuse.

Mr. Thomson: It was a statesmanlike act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was certainly right, and the agreement has been

renewed four or five times since. It must be renewed, because nothing better can be done. South Australia came on the market with sandalwood, and the Premier has had trouble for the last year or two in maintaining the agreement.

The Premier: It is still in a serious position.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, owing to the fact that we thought we possessed the only sandalwood in Australia, whereas it was discovered that South Australia possessed some too. I do not think we can maintain the 6,000 tons output.

The Premier: No. We cannot maintain more than 4,000 tons.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The situation is awkward enough. Whatever is done for the good of the men in the industry will receive the support of members on this side without the slightest attempt to misrepresent anything that may be arranged. The position is rendered serious for the sandalwood getters in Western Australia by the possibility of competition. I do not know how the Premier persuaded South Australia to limit its output.

The Premier: If that had not been done, we would have been gone entirely.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: South Australia was starting on virgin forest, not having shipped any sandalwood before.

The Premier: And South Australia was paying only £9 per ton against our £16.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In our time the price was put up to £25 per ton. That was when the Australian output was limited to 6,000 tons. I sympathise with the prospectors. If there are any people whom I would like to help, it is the men who have been living on back prospecting. We all like to do as well as possible by the old prospectors. I have no advice to offer on the situation. The Government will simply have to do their best to keep the men going at all.

HON. G. TAYLOR. (Mount Margaret) [10.18]: I made some remarks about sandalwood during the general discussion of the Estimates. I then outlined to the Premier my idea of what would happen. Unless the district of the member for Menzies is constituted differently from mine his sandalwood getters are most fortunate to be within 70 miles of the railway.

Mr. Panton: I am taking the general average over the lot.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Some of the sandalwood getters in my electorate are carting 120 miles and more, and have been doing so for the last five years. Very little wood is obtainable within 100 miles of the railway in the Mount Margaret district. The men are paying 1s. 6d. per mile cartage over 120 miles, and £2 14s. rail freight to Fremantle; and these charges off £16 per ton do not leave much for pulling and cleaning. If the cartage charges were reduced—I realise that that is impossible under conditions operating to-day—something might be done. In view of the long distances over which the carting has to be done, there is not much likelihood of that. The only thing I can see is that the Government will have to make an advance to pullers and cutters that will meet the extra cost of cartage. I do not think the sandalwood getters can carry on if they have to pay £9 a ton for cartage, and about £2 14s. for railway freights, which would leave them £4 or £5 out of their £16. I do not suggest that the Premier should reduce the royalty in order to make up the deficiency regarding cartage charges. As Western Australia and South Australia are the two sandalwood suppliers, I do not know if the respective Governments would have much compunction in levying a higher price for the commodity in China. I am afraid, however, that if something is not done we shall lose the sandalwood trade in Western Australia, because it is impossible to carry on much longer with the present charges. I hope the Premier will be able to see his way clear to make some concession to the sandalwood-getters. The member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) made reference to the association of sandalwood prospectors, but I do not think there is any necessity for such an organisation. Under the original arrangements, in the event of a dispute taking place, the Conservator would take charge and his decision would be binding. In such circumstances, the buying companies have little say in the matter. The Premier will admit that he has never crossed swords with sandalwood prospectors, who always discuss matters with the Parliamentary representatives for the districts affected.

The Premier: The Conservator of Forests has acknowledged that he has received great help from all members of Parliament representing districts where sandalwood

is pulled. Their assistance is valuable because of their local knowledge, and the Conservator endeavours to meet their wishes whenever possible.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I know all the men engaged in this work in my electorate, and I fail to see any necessity for an association to deal with their interests. I have not a word to say against the secretary of that association, who naturally desires to have every sandalwood-getter in his organisation. I know the prospectors and the men concerned, and I know that nothing is too much to do in the interests of men who have spent so many years in the outback areas.

**MR. J. H. SMITH** (Nelson) [10.26]: The Forests Department is on a better footing now than it was some time ago. The Conservator knows his business and is making a good job of it. It is pleasing to know that the revenue actually received by the department exceeded the Estimates by nearly £19,000. I notice that while a large proportion came from the sandalwood industry, a very considerable amount came from licences and royalties. I wish to make an appeal to the Premier in his capacity as Minister controlling the Forests Department. I ask him to use his influence with the Conservator of Forests in the interests of the young men who have been engaged in the timber industry for years, but did not have a license prior to 1918. The Act says that unless they were working in the industry and had licenses prior to 1918 they cannot get licenses to-day. Consequently boys who in 1918 were assisting their parents in the bush and have been working on private property since then, cannot get licenses, not even to cut on group settlements. Again, I want the Minister to use his influence in respect to the dedication of forests. To-day there is being dedicated a lot of forest, some of which should be agricultural land. The Conservator is too greedy in that respect, and too jealous of his forests.

Hon. G. Taylor: A good fault.

Hon. J. H. SMITH: Yes, but he is holding up settlement. The Conservator is spending a great deal of money and employing a lot of practical bushmen for reforestation purposes. But this means destroying a fair amount of valuable timber. The industry is in a parlous condition and we do not know when it is going to revive.

I want the Minister to see if he cannot arrange that these bushmen on reforestation work should avoid destroying good timber by ringbarking and should be asked to mark it. Then as soon as the industry revives all the good, mature stuff could be brought out. If the Minister would use his influence with the Conservator in that direction, it would be in the best interests of the State.

**MR. TEESDALE** (Roebourne) [10.30]: I want to support the members for Menzies (Mr. Panton) and Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) in what they have said about the prospectors engaged in getting sandalwood. The sandalwood industry has been very good to the Minister for Forests. I remember when the conditions were very different from what they are to-day, and so I have no hesitation in asking that out of the fullness of his exchequer he should give these old prospectors a rather better deal than they have been getting. Everything in respect of sandalwood is considerably higher than it was four years ago, and I hope the Minister, after having listened to what members have said to-night, will not, as he does sometimes, forget it when he gets back to office.

**MR. ANGELO** (Gascoyne) [10.32]: I want to bring before the notice of the Minister a disadvantage under which several people in my electorate have been labouring since the passing of the last agreement. Prior to that several men were making a living at sandalwood getting. Suddenly they were told, without previous notice, that they could sell no more sandalwood for export, because the Gascoyne district had been reserved for the purpose of distillation. At the request of those men I went to the department with a view to seeing the Conservator. However, the Conservator was out and I was referred to one of the distillers. That gentleman told me he would be only too pleased to take all the sandalwood those men on the Gascoyne could produce. He made arrangements to purchase five or six tons, after which he ceased operations. I then saw the other distiller but found he was not prepared to buy. Ever since then those men have been done out of their livelihood and have had to take up other avocations. Lately they approached me again and asked me to find out if the distillers would take their sandalwood. I went to both firms, but they told me the sandalwood from Gascoyne was not suit-

able for their purpose. I then went to the department and left the information with the officer in charge. He said, "If that is the position, I will get the Minister to release the Gascoyne district from the embargo against the export of sandalwood." When the embargo was first put on, one of those men up on the Gascoyne had 15 tons of wood stacked out on the bush. Since he was not allowed to sell it for export and could not sell it to the distillers, he left it out there until disastrously a bush-fire came along and burnt up the lot. So he lost the result of many months of labour. Fully expecting that the Conservator would ask the Minister for Forests to release Gascoyne, I told those men I hoped to have some good news for them. But the other day I got a letter intimating that one of those distillers said he would have another go at the Gascoyne sandalwood and take a ton of it. Fancy sending men out for a ton of wood! So disgusted was I that I decided to leave it until the Estimates were under consideration and then bring it before the Minister. I suggest to the Minister that he tell those distillers they have to buy the sandalwood and that if it is no good to them he will leave it to the sandalwood getters to sell for themselves.

**MR. CHESSON** (Cue) [10.36]: I wish to support the remarks of the goldfields members in putting up a claim for better consideration for the prospectors who are also sandalwood getters. Those men have to do at least six months' prospecting before they can get a 12-ton order. The quantity allocated to the prospectors is very small, and when we take into consideration the cost of getting that wood in to the railway and freighting it down here, it is seen that the prospectors do not realise more than about £7 per ton.

Hon. G. Taylor: More like £5 a ton for some of them.

Mr. CHESSON: Yes, probably it means not more than about £5. Out at Mt. Sir Samuel the men have had to cart the wood over long distances. First they require to have a horse and dray. Collecting the wood they bring it in to a road and freight it in a motor lorry at a cost of 1s. 6d. per mile, so there is not too much left for the prospector. Many of these men pulling wood are well up in years. They did most of the pioneering on the goldfields and now they have come to that stage of life where it is only because of the bit of wood they pull that

they are able to go out prospecting at all. They can go to the Prospecting Board and get sustenance but they cannot, at the same time, get a sandalwood order. So a sandalwood order for 12 tons, when they get it, has to keep them for 12 months. For six months they are prospecting and for the other six months they are pulling sandalwood. The price allowed for the sandalwood getter is £16. That is a fixed amount so the only way to get any further consideration for these old chaps is out of the royalty. The motorman must be paid his 1s. 6d. per ton, and then there is the railway freight to be paid. Also, as the member for Menzies remarked, there is the 12½ per cent. reduction for roots. I wish to enter this plea on behalf of the prospectors with a view to ascertaining whether something can be done to assist the men who have done so much for Western Australia, realising also what sandalwood has meant to this State.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [10.40]: I appreciate the views that have been expressed by the various members in their plea for more generous consideration for the sandalwood prospectors, and I should very much like to be able to do something for them. The position of the sandalwood trade to-day is very difficult indeed. There are stacks of sandalwood at Fremantle to the value of a quarter of a million pounds.

Hon. G. Taylor: Besides what is on the water, I suppose.

The PREMIER: Much of the wood at Fremantle has been there for many years, and has been paid for, and is carrying bank interest against the owners. Those who are supposed to be sandalwood kings and making fortunes have been having a hard struggle during the past year or two. As the Leader of the Opposition stated, the difficulty has been increased by the fact that South Australia has entered the market as a producer quite unexpectedly: so, instead of our having the output of 6,000 tons a year, we have an agreement with the South Australian Government under which they are to have 1,700 tons this year and 2,000 tons next year. The market can absorb only about 6,000 tons, which means that the output from Western Australia, so long as the wood lasts in South Australia, will be reduced to about 4,000 tons a year.

Mr. Thomson: Has South Australia a big area?

The PREMIER: Nobody seems to know. The officials there did not know they had any sandalwood until about two years ago, when a sandalwooder from the West went over there and discovered it.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is not exactly like ours.

The PREMIER: The South Australian people knew the wood, but did not know it as sandalwood. They knew it by a different name.

Mr. Teesdale: I saw it over here two years ago and was told it was no good, and now Skuthorpe is making a fortune out of it.

The PREMIER: Still, the Chinese will take it; and so long as they will buy it, it matters not what the quality is.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is nothing like our sandalwood.

Mr. Teesdale: But it is full of oil.

The PREMIER: Still, the Chinese will purchase it; so South Australia has come on the market as a serious competitor to this State. No examination has been made of the South Australian territory where the wood is being obtained, and no one knows the extent of the sandalwood there. Some people say it will peter out in a year or two, and others say it will last for many years. Had South Australia refused to work in co-operation with us and marketed her sandalwood on her own account, it would have practically killed the industry here. The getters over there were receiving only £9 per ton—and the wood is adjacent to the railway—as against the £16 per ton paid here. South Australia would have been able to supply the whole of the 6,000 tons required by China annually, and we would have been out of the market.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the pullers there do better at £9 than the pullers here at £16 a ton.

The PREMIER: The matter was discussed with the South Australian Government, and we were able to put up a strong case for consideration. The business had been pioneered by Western Australia, and South Australia had entered it without any trouble. Consequently, the Government there agreed to work in with us. Skuthorpe, the man who got the South Australian sandalwood rights for 12 months, made a lot of money out of it. I think he was paying the South Australian Government only 10s. per ton royalty.

Mr. Teesdale: That is so.

The PREMIER: The South Australian Government knew nothing of what we were

getting, and they fell in badly. Skuthorpe had an open go with the pullers at £9 per ton and 10s. royalty, for he was competing with us at £16 a ton and £9 royalty. When the year expired the South Australian Government had nothing more to do with him.

Mr. Teesdale: They called for tenders then.

The PREMIER: Yes, and I think they are now getting £9 10s. per ton. The Governments of the two States have agreed to work together. South Australia is limiting its output and we are limiting ours, so between us we shall be able just to meet the demand. Again, when we thought everything was plain sailing we found that the same man who was put out of South Australia had returned here and got sandalwood cutting rights over the whole of the Hampton Plains estate, and he came in against us once more as a competitor, and is putting out, I believe, nearly 1,000 tons a year. He is not working in co-operation with the others or with South Australia; he is not bound to pay £16 per ton. He is paying what he likes, and I believe he is getting the pulling done for £9 a ton. He is not paying any royalty except what he is paying to the Hampton Plains people, which is a private arrangement. I do not think his payment to them would be anything like £9 a ton. While we thought we had the market in China, pretty well fixed to take our output and that of South Australia at a fair price, the Chinese are benefiting by this competition, and Skuthorpe is putting in 1,000 tons against us. The Hampton Plains supply will not last very long. I believe a considerable quantity of wood supposed to come off Hampton Plains really comes from a little outside the boundaries of Hampton Plains.

Hon. G. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Teesdale: You will have to watch that gentleman.

The PREMIER: Consequently, we have gone to a little expense to put on special inspectors to ensure that it all comes from Hampton Plains, and none of it from Crowe lands just outside. It takes a good deal of watching, too.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is money well spent.

The PREMIER: Consequently there is a disturbing element there. The whole position is most difficult. Those engaged in the business have had a very bad time during the last two or three years. For-



tunately, the only boat loaded in Fremantle during the recent strike was one that was taking sandalwood, and 2,000 tons has left in the last week or so. That has improved the position somewhat.

Mr. Sampson: Is not there a danger of fire through the wood being left there so long?

The PREMIER: I suppose there must be an element of danger from fire when wood is stacked in that way. The fact of having such a large quantity stacked at Fremantle adds to the cost of the wood. The stacks are almost mountain high and the wood has to be handled sometimes four and five times. There are no mechanical contrivances for handling it. It is built into high stacks, and that adds to the cost to the owners. Further, a considerable quantity of it is constantly breaking up into small bits, and taking into consideration the bank interest paid on advances, the financial position has not been too good for the owners. I am not in a position to say what I can do or whether I shall be able to do anything for the prospectors. I am keenly anxious to assist the old men who are battling out a living in those lonely, out-back places.

Hon. G. Taylor: They deserve it, too.

Mr. Teesdale: There would be nothing in the statement about charging for roots, whether there were any or not?

The PREMIER: I have made a note of the matter.

Mr. Angelo: You have done a good deal to protect them.

The PREMIER: I should like to see the price increased.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They are expected to take the roots when they take the rest of the tree.

The PREMIER: They are supposed to pull out the tree and not to cut it.

Hon. G. Taylor: The size of the roots is defined in the regulations.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The root would be wasted if they did not take it.

The PREMIER: It will not help me in any way to forego any portion of the royalty on behalf of the prospectors if the little Bill that has been sent up to another place is amended in the way it is desired by that Chamber. We say we have an amount for sandalwood forestation of £7,000, and that the sum of £5,000 is not required this year. Another place, however,

says that that sum must remain for that purpose.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will not agree to that amendment.

The PREMIER: No. I hope we shall have our own way in that. At any rate their action is not conducive to the Government allowing a rebate of a couple of pounds a ton for these prospectors.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not for that reason.

The PREMIER: No. I do not suggest that the money would be made available for that purpose, but it does not help the Government to overcome the difficulty when money is retained for a purpose for which it is not required.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would have great difficulty in keeping the export quantity going.

The PREMIER: I have been explaining how the quantity has come down. We have a difficulty in providing orders for so many prospectors, though we would like to bring them all in. In the interests of those engaged in the business, the output has to be limited, and someone has to go short.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Government cannot commit themselves to any definite kind of action now.

The PREMIER: No. The position of the trade to-day is very critical and difficult. About a quarter of million pounds worth of wood are stacked at Fremantle. It has not been held merely for a year, and the interest on the advances paid only for that period, for I know that interest has been paid on the advances for a number of years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If you force a greater quantity of sandalwood out of the country, you will send the price down.

The PREMIER: We can only try to control the industry at the other end. The South Australian Government have seen the matter in a sensible light and are co-operating with this State. If we competed with each other the Chinese would be the only people to get the benefit. I will go carefully and fully into the questions that have been raised. Although I am not in a position to make any promise, I shall be glad to do what is possible in the circumstances.

Vote put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.*