

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

Ayes	17
Noes	23

Majority against .. 6

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Maley
Mr. Barnard	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Davy	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Taylor
Mr. E. B. Johnston	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Latham	Mr. North
Mr. Lindsay	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Rowe
Mr. Heron	Mr. Sleeman
Miss Holman	Mr. Troy
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Sampson	Mr. McCallum
Mr. J. H. Smith	Mr. Kennedy

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 8.5 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 7th December, 1927.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—"KOOLINDA" STRANDING.

Denham Channel.

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Will he lay on the Table the report of and evidence taken before the Marine Court which inquired into the alleged negligence of the master of the "Koolinda" in navigating his ship, and also the report of and evidence taken before the Board of Marine Inquiry into the stranding of the "Koolinda"? 2, Will the Government take immediate steps to have the buoys in Denham Channel placed in the positions as gazetted? 3, Will the Government arrange with the Commonwealth Government to re-survey the Denham Channel forthwith?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The Marine Court which investigated the stranding of the motor vessel "Koolinda," and subsequently inquired into the alleged negligence on the part of the master, was appointed under the Commonwealth Navigation Act, and the Federal authorities, not the State Government, provided for the reporting of the case. 2, There is only one buoy in Denham Channel, the position of which is in dispute, and that is No. 3 buoy. Since the Marine Court inquired into the stranding of the motor vessel "Koolinda," endeavours were made to obtain the exact position of this buoy with the aid of the motor vessel "Koolinda," but she was unable to get close enough owing to there being insufficient water. No boats will be

available now until the Commonwealth steamer "Kyogle" again visits the North-West, and this is the only means at present available to do the work correctly. 3. Representations have been made from time to time to the Commonwealth Government for surveys on the North-West coast, but the State Government has been advised that there is more need of urgent survey on the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, where the Commonwealth survey vessel is engaged. Further, the Commonwealth Government consider that confined waters, such as Shark Bay, should be surveyed by the State Governments.

QUESTION—STATE INSURANCE CLAIMS.

Mining Employees' Compensation.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the reply of the Minister for Mines to my question of the 1st inst., disclosing that, roughly, one-half of the claims lodged by mining employees suffering from miners' complaints under the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act were rejected, do the Government intend, before the session closes, to amend the Act so that justice may be done to afflicted men who, as the Act is now being administered, are not entitled to its benefits?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The Minister for Mines did not furnish the information contained in my reply of the 1st instant. It is not intended to amend the Act this session. Of the 14 cases in which claims were declined, 10 were quite outside the provisions of the Act. Several were not even suffering from an industrial disease, and two claimants had ceased work before the Act was proclaimed.

BILL—HOSPITALS.

Read a third time, and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT .. AMENDMENT.

Request for Conference.

The Assembly's message requesting a conference with managers of the Council, and intimating that the Assembly would

be represented by three managers, now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That a message be transmitted to the Assembly agreeing to a conference as requested by the Legislative Assembly in its message, that three members be appointed managers to represent the Council, that these three managers be selected by ballot, and that the conference meet in the President's room at 4.45 p.m.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Under Standing Order 322 the Honorary Minister must name the managers, and then some other hon. member may ask for a ballot.

The CHAIRMAN: Standing Order 322 reads—

Every motion for requesting a conference shall contain the names of the members proposed by the mover to be the managers for the Council.

And then Standing Order 323 provides—

If upon such motion any member shall so require, the managers for the Council shall be selected by ballot.

Up to last session, I think, the procedure has been for the Minister in charge of the Bill to include in his motion agreeing to a conference the names of the managers; and, then, if any hon. member desires as manager some hon. member other than those named in the Minister's motion, the question goes to the ballot.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Then I nominate Mr. Lovekin, Mr. Ewing and myself to be managers and ask that their names be included in the message.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

BILL—AUDIT ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it disagreed to an amendment made by the Council, now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Insert after the word "years," in line 7, the words "provided that this subsection shall not apply to the present occupant of the office":

The CHAIRMAN: The reason given by the Assembly for disagreeing to the amendment is that it is desirable that the occupant of the office shall, in common with all public servants, retire at the age of 65 years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be not pressed.

It is an almost universal practice that public servants may be obliged to retire at 65 years of age. The Government feel that no exception should be made in this instance. It has been stated it would be a breach of contract if such a provision were included in the Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Judges do not have to retire until they are 70 years of age.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The whole matter rests in the hands of Parliament. I do not know whether it is intended the Auditor General shall remain in his present position for life. If that is so, he may go on until he is 80 years of age, at which stage he might be quite incapable of carrying out his duties.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Unless a resolution of Parliament is passed to deal with the position.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I know that the Audit Act contains a provision that the Governor may, at any time, suspend the Auditor General from his office for incapacity, incompetence or misbehaviour, and it would be left for Parliament to decide whether the Auditor General should be removed from his position. What a sad end that would be after years of honourable public service such as the Auditor General has rendered! The Government 10 or 15 years hence would, in the first place, be obliged to suspend him, and then to refer the matter to Parliament for decision. What would his family think of that? What an awful testimonial at the end of his days!

Hon. G. W. Miles: Was the Auditor General not appointed for life, just as the judges are appointed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot say that that is so. He was appointed under the provisions of the existing Audit Act and that enables the Governor to suspend him in the event of physical or mental incapacity.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Exactly the same provision applies to the judges.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It had to be applied in Queensland where an Act of Parliament was necessary to remove a judge from the bench, as he had become incapable of carrying out his duties owing to old age.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I intend asking the Committee to request the Assembly to grant a conference on this question, because when our amendment was considered in that House the real point was not touched upon by any member of the Government or of the House. The point here was that the Bill would amount to repudiation of a contract entered into with the Auditor General. Under the Audit Act his appointment is exactly on all fours with that applying to the appointment of judges, and he may hold his office during good behaviour. Section 9 says—

The Auditor General shall hold his office during good behaviour, and shall not be removed therefrom unless an address praying for such removal shall be presented to the Governor by the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council, respectively, in the same session of the Parliament.

Then the section goes on to say that the Governor may at any time suspend the Auditor General for incapacity, incompetence or misbehaviour. Subject to those provisions the Auditor General has a life appointment, just as the judges have. The Auditor General is an officer of Parliament, and Parliament, I should think, should be the last body in the world to repudiate a contract or to do anything that would tend to violate the sanctity of a contract. The Chief Secretary would be the last person to suggest anything of that description and the same remark applies to the Premier. The fact is they have not grasped the point. I intend to ask for a conference at which our managers can confer with messengers from the Assembly to see whether something can be done to avoid the repudiation of the contract. Personally I think the provision is correct and that the Auditor General should retire at 65 years of age without the necessity of any vote of Parliament. In this instance, however, the appointment has been made under a statute and the Auditor General is an officer of Parliament. We should not do anything that will repudiate the provisions of a statute we have passed. I move an amendment—

That the question be amended by striking out all the words after "that," and that the words "a message be sent to the Legislative

Assembly requesting a conference on the Bill, and that the Council be represented by the Chief Secretary, Mr. Nicholson, and the mover" be inserted in lieu.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In stating the question you, Mr. Chairman, quoted me as moving that the amendment be not insisted upon. I understand the measure is a money Bill and I therefore moved that the amendment be not pressed.

The CHAIRMAN: The question whether it is or is not a money Bill was not raised at any stage during the passage of the measure through this House. I did not treat it as a money Bill or a taxing measure that the Council may not amend. Had I treated it as such, I would not have put the Title. As the question has not been raised until this juncture, it is rather late to stress it now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not raising it now but am seeking information. If it is a money Bill and we insist upon the amendment, there may be further trouble with the Assembly. If it is not a money Bill, then I take it your view is correct. I understood it was a money Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: It is rather late to expect me to give a decision on that point offhand. For my part I think it would need a good deal of imagination to regard it as a money Bill. It has not been treated as such up to the present.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I do not think there is any doubt but that the measure is a money Bill. It was introduced in another place by a Message from the Governor, but that does not affect the position now. We requested an amendment, not knowing it was a money Bill. In fact, I do not know that it had the proper endorsement when it was received here. In the circumstances we were entitled not to treat it as a money Bill. In accordance with Standing Order 225 we can press requests or ask for a conference and the latter course is what I suggest we shall adopt. The point involved is a small one and can be adjusted at a conference.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It may be argued that this is a money Bill. Still, our amendment does not impose any additional tax or expenditure. It simply provides that the present Auditor-General shall not be retired at the age of 65. We are not amending anything from a monetary standpoint, and so I think we are within our rights in sending along this amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think Mr. Holmes misunderstands me. All I am worrying about is the form in which my motion should be put. I should like it to be in the correct form.

The CHAIRMAN: When the Bill was in Committee, the amendment now disagreed to by the Assembly was made as if the Bill were an ordinary Bill. Then the Title was put, and the amendment reported to the House as an amendment occurring in an ordinary Bill after which a message was sent to the Assembly notifying them that the Council agreed to the Bill, subject to a certain amendment. Had the Bill been treated as a money Bill our message to the Assembly would have requested that the amendment be made. The Assembly raised no objection to the form we used. Now we are called upon to decide whether our amendment should or should not have been in the form of a request. That being so, I rule that the Bill, having been dealt with as an ordinary Bill all through its ordinary stages, is not a money Bill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: When I moved that amendment in Committee, I was given to understand that the necessary money Bill certificate was not on the Bill when it came here. I have since learnt that in another place the Bill was introduced by a Message from the Governor, and that necessarily it is a money Bill.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is the certificate here?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Not that I know of. The Chairman could tell us.

The CHAIRMAN: The certificate is here.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Very well, it is a money Bill. However, it makes no difference at this stage, for we are entitled to press our request, or alternatively to ask for a conference.

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

BILL—MEEKATHARRA-WILUNA RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. HARRIS ((North-East) [3.37]: I understand the Bill is brought forward in fulfilment of a promise made by successive Governments that if the developments

at Wiluna proved satisfactory to the authorities in the Department of Mines, the Government would build a railway. The Bill is in distinct contrast with the one we had here a week or so ago for the removal and tearing up of certain railways serving mining centres. I might here remark to those who voted against and so defeated that Bill, that there is in the "Government Gazette" an intimation that the three railways we thought we had conserved by defeating that Bill have been, to use a railway term, spiked over. In other words, those railways are closed to all traffic. Naturally we welcome any influx of capital to this State for the development of a mining proposition. In this instance, it is a huge proposition and must be worked on a very large scale. I understand the money to be provided for the railway is what is known as cheap money, namely, money furnished for development purposes at $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., similarly to the expenditure on the railway constructed at Esperance.

Hon. H. Stewart: Has this proposition been inspected by the Migration and Development Commission?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I cannot say. Probably the Chief Secretary will tell us when he replies to the debate. It is remarkable that greater consideration was not shown by the Advisory Board to the possibilities of the territory between Leonora and Wiluna, having regard to its great mineral and pastoral resources.

Hon. H. Stewart: Did not the Advisory Board consider it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Seemingly the board were circumscribed in their investigations, in that they were asked to recommend the best route for the railway solely from a railway point of view. In 1911, when the Railway Advisory Board submitted a report as to which was the better route for a railway to Lawlers—Sandstone to Lawlers or Leonora to Lawlers, the State Mining Engineer stated that unquestionably from a mining point of view the best route was from Leonora. Let me quote a short extract from his report—

The route via Leonora has great advantages from the mining development point of view to put against its much greater length and cost of construction. It can be taken almost all the way through more or less mining country in which there are large possibilities of development. It would assist greatly in the development of the known mining centres of Diorite King, Mount Clifford,

Wilson's Patch, Lake Darlot, Lawlers, Mount Sir Samuel, Kathleen Valley, Mount Keith and New England before it reaches Wiluna. The Lawlers and Mount Sir Samuel districts have been very large producers of gold, and would be very greatly assisted in again becoming busy centres if they had railway communication and consequent reduced working costs. From the point of view of the development of mining along its route, a railway by Leonora to Wiluna is unquestionably far superior to one by any of the suggested lines running westward.

The Advisory Board's report has treated this more from a railway point of view than from a development viewpoint. It seems to me the board had an extraordinary disregard for the great possibilities in that direction. Certainly the railway would be much longer and would cost considerably more. But when we have regard for the mining centres alluded to in the extract I have quoted, and the possibilities of pastoral country that would be opened up, and for the facilities that would be provided in respect of bringing down stock by the Canning stock route, beyond Wiluna, it is seen that there is much to be said for the alternative proposition. Out eastward there is a huge tract of excellent country that would be opened up by a railway from Leonora. Certainly railways are not built for pastoral purposes, but I am stressing the possibilities of that area in order to direct attention to that phase of the question, which apparently has not received the consideration it warrants. I do not question the integrity of the Advisory Board, but I do question their judgment, unless it be that they have been circumscribed in their inquiry. The attorney of the Wiluna Gold Mines, at the inquiry held by the Advisory Board, said that time was the essence of the contract. Now we have the loan proposals before us and I cannot see that any money has been set aside for the construction of the railway. Under the heading of railways there is a sum of nearly £15,000 for surveys on the Brookton-Dale, Boup Brook-Cranbrook, Ejanding northwards, Kalkalling-Bullfinch, Dale River-Armadale, Manjimup-Mt. Barker and Wiluna railways, for the Fremantle harbour extension deviation and for other minor surveys as required. If we allocate the £15,000 amongst all those railways, only a few pounds will be available for the survey of the Meekatharra-Wiluna route and, as I have pointed out, no money has been provided for the construction of the line. The Minister for Railways, in moving the second

reading of the Bill in another place, quoted the correspondence between the mining company and successive Governments. One of the paragraphs stated—

The route to be at the selection of your Government, and the building of the railway to begin immediately the Bill receives the approval of Parliament.

It will be seen that the company expect the construction to be started immediately the railway has received Parliamentary authorisation, and the attorney for the company told the Advisory Board that time was the essence of the contract. Notwithstanding that, the Bill has been brought down late in the session, and no provision has been made in the Estimates for the construction of the line. Certainly the Deputy Commissioner of Railways, in the Advisory Board's report, said that from a railway point of view it would be far more economical to work a line from Meekatharra to Wiluna than from Leonora to Wiluna, but I submit that from the point of view of the State, the route from Leonora to Wiluna would have been the better one. I do not intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I desire to direct attention to those facts. The Advisory Board also stated that they had no estimate of the cost of construction. Let me inform members that the railway recently constructed by the manganese company from Meekatharra to Horseshoe was built expeditiously, and I am told on good authority that it cost less than £2,000 per mile.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They were a long time starting; about five years.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Yes, they were a bit long-winded, but after they got the necessary backing they started the work and the line has been built. It has been estimated by a railway officer that the line to Wiluna will cost about £3,000 per mile. The line from Meekatharra to Horseshoe was constructed under the contract system, and I suppose it is only reasonable to assume that day labour will be adopted by the Public Works Department in constructing the Wiluna line. The estimates of cost are probably rough, but I mention those points in view of Mr. Vail's statement that time is the essence of the contract. Much was said by people who made representations to the Advisory Board, as well as in the various reports, that an effort should be made to give the trade to the natural port, the object be-

ing in serving a particular district to keep the cost of transport down to a minimum. Members will recall that the eastern gold-fields agitated for the construction of the Esperance railway for many years in order that the trade might pass through the natural port of Esperance. That railway has at last been built, but according to the report of Mr. Stileman 95 per cent. of the imports into Western Australia pass through the port of Fremantle. What applies to Esperance as regards the importation from other States of the commodities we eat, drink and wear will apply to Geraldton.

Hon. A. Burvill: The port of Esperance has not yet been made.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And the same will apply to Geraldton.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Geraldton is in the same position. Less than 6,000 tons of imported goods is received through the port of Geraldton.

Hon. A. Burvill: Do you advocate that that sort of thing should continue for ever?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am pointing out the actual fact.

Hon. E. H. Gray: How will you alter it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am not here to alter it. It has been argued that Geraldton should receive the trade to which it is geographically entitled, but 95 per cent. of the imports into the State pass through Fremantle and, on the proposals submitted by Mr. Stileman, it is estimated that that proportion will be preserved during the next 20 or 25 years. Consequently the argument that Geraldton is the nearest port to Wiluna and will command the trade of Wiluna if the railway be built from Meekatharra is not likely to be borne out. On paper it seems to be sound argument, but in practice it does not work out that way. Less than 6,000 tons of goods is received by the port of Geraldton, and when we realise that the port serves probably 20,000 people, members will appreciate the smallness of the part it plays.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What is the difference in the distance from Fremantle to Wiluna via Meekatharra and via Leonora?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: From Fremantle to Meekatharra is 612 miles and from Meekatharra to Wiluna 105 miles, a total of 717 miles. From Fremantle to Leonora the distance is 548 miles and from Leonora to Wiluna 190 miles, a total of 738 miles. Thus the distance from Fremantle to Wiluna via Leonora is greater by 21 miles, and taking the rate of freight for class B goods, the

difference in the cost to the company would be 1s. 9d. per ton if carried over the longer route. That route, however, would be infinitely better than the Meekatharra to Wiluna route, which can serve only one mining district.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It will also serve the pastoral country.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The pastoral country on the Meekatharra-Wiluna route has been taken up, but the pastoral country beyond Wiluna is in an entirely different category. The Kalgoorlie-Leonora railway league received information from the Lands Department showing that in the Meekatharra-Wiluna country in 1925 there had been taken up 11,488,950 acres, which were held by 74 lessees and ten registered companies. In 1927 the area taken up was 10,751,331 acres, a decrease in the two years of 737,619 acres, while the number of lessees was 68 and the number of registered companies was ten. Now take the Leonora-Wiluna country.—

Hon. G. W. Miles: You were fortunate in getting South Australian capital to develop that country. That is why it has been developed so rapidly.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Lands Department returns disclose that in 1925 in the Leonora-Wiluna country, 13,698,500 acres had been taken up by 94 lessees and five registered companies. In 1927, 14,223,792 acres had been taken up by 73 lessees and ten registered companies. In other words, there had been an increase of 525,000 acres in the two years. A railway on the Leonora-Wiluna route would traverse a stretch of country greater by 85 miles than a railway on the Meekatharra-Wiluna route, and would also provide opportunities for people to develop the country lying eastward toward the South Australian border. The longer route certainly offers infinitely greater possibilities for pastoral development.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: Is there any possibility of another Wiluna being discovered?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not wish to quote a lot of figures about the production of gold, but the State Mining Engineer, in his report of 1911, mentioned various mines of considerable promise that would be served by a railway from Leonora to Wiluna. I understand that the Wiluna mining company have not yet determined the process to be adopted to treat the ore, but if they are successful in treating it, I should not be surprised if investors in Australia as well

as in the Old Country who formerly put money into mines in the Leonora-Wiluna areas again provided funds to test those areas. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, but I regret that the Railway Advisory Board were not instructed to submit a report on the best route, having regard to the mining possibilities and the pastoral possibilities offered by the longer route from Leonora to Wiluna.

HON. A. BURVILL (South-East) [4.0] I compliment the Government upon the fact that by this Bill they are carrying out the policy of decentralisation in the transport of primary produce to the nearest port. If they would only apply that principle generally I am sure it would be greatly to the advantage of the country. Mr. Harris referred to the pastoral and mining country that would be affected by this railway, but omitted to repeat what the Chief Secretary had said, namely, that there would be a saving of several pounds per ton in the transport of material to and from the nearest port.

Hon. H. Seddon: What material?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: He stated that there would be a difference of only 21 miles.

Hon. A. BURVILL: He also omitted to say that the Manganese Co., which now has a railway, intends to send its ore to Geraldton for transport overseas. This company is fully seized of the desirability of getting to the nearest port. If Geraldton is to be the port for further mining propositions, as well as that for the growing exports of wheat and wool, it would be worthwhile opening it up as should have been done years ago. Mr. Harris referred to the fact as instanced by the Engineer-in-Chief, that 90 per cent. of the exports from and imports to the State practically go through the Fremantle harbour. He did not, however, state that it was impossible to use Esperance as a harbour.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Government are going to spend £200 at Esperance this year.

Hon. A. BURVILL: Before Fremantle was opened up I consider that Esperance was in a better position to become a harbour than it is now. I have taken the trouble to ascertain what money has been spent at the ports of Fremantle, Geraldton, and Esperance up to 1925. I find that in the case of Fremantle the expenditure was £2,471,000; at Geraldton, £77,000—in the latter case I ascribe the expenditure there to the desire of the present Government to give that

harbour a fair deal—while at Esperance only £10,000 was spent. It is impossible to make a harbour with only £10,000. Apparently Mr. Harris desires to continue the policy of directing to Fremantle all the business created as the result of the opening up of the Wiluna mine.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I did not advocate that.

Hon. A. BURVILL: It must be at the back of his mind to continue shutting out Esperance and concentrating on Fremantle.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What produce would there be from the Wiluna mine to export at Fremantle? The machinery will all go through the city.

Hon. A. BURVILL: There is no reason why that should be so. The machinery should go to Wiluna from the nearest port if overseas vessels can get into it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: No vessel would call there merely to unload a little machinery.

Hon. A. BURVILL: All the ports in the State should be opened up. We know what congestion there is with wheat handling at Fremantle. If the other harbours are opened up so that overseas ships can get to them, that congestion would not occur. I am surprised at Mr. Harris's advocacy of centralisation at Fremantle.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I am afraid you are a little dull of comprehension.

HON. H. STEWART (South-East) [4.5]: I should like to hear what other members have to say in advocacy of this Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I suppose they agree with it.

Hon. H. STEWART: I should like to have heard more reasons why it is considered desirable that we should pass this measure.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Do you not think it will have a bearing on the Central Province election?

Hon. H. STEWART: I am not concerned about that. I want to hear some good reason why this railway should be authorised. I am in grave doubt as to whether it would not be better in the interests of the mining industry to postpone further consideration of the Bill, which might then be brought forward next session. We are told it has come down mainly because of a conditional promise that was given by the previous Government to the Wiluna Mines

Ltd., which promise the present Government have chosen to carry out.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Chief Secretary said the Bill would have been brought down in any case.

Hon. H. STEWART: It would be gratifying if all the promises made by one Government were kept by that which succeeded it. It would be a difficult matter to find a Parliamentary term that would characterise this action. Last year the Kalgarin settlers were promised a railway for the transport of their wheat. The line was recommended by the Advisory Board, but no Bill has been brought down this session to give effect to that promise. A definite promise was made that the Bill for the line would be submitted. The railway is a positive necessity in the interests of production, and would have become an increasingly valuable asset to the country. More reasons have been and could be advanced for the construction of the Kalgarin Railway than for the building of this one. A principle that has operated in this State for many years has been violated. The Railway Advisory Board reported that the line should be constructed to serve the country from Kalgarin to Lake Grace. Before any Bill was brought forward the Engineer in Chief, apparently under Ministerial instructions, examined the country. In his report he took into consideration the whole of the railway system of this State. The outcome of his investigations was that a special committee was appointed. Apparently through the action of a Minister an alteration was made in the system that has been in vogue for many years, one that obviated political interference with railway routes, and tended to prevent the abuses known in Victoria some 40 years ago as log-rolling in association with railway construction. In the case under review, the Railway Advisory Board, a non-political body, was set aside by the Government through the action of a Minister, not Cabinet, calling in the head of the department to deal with the question. Delay inevitably resulted. So much for promises and conditional promises. What I have said shows that a promise of a very substantial nature was violated. Are we therefore justified in taking a conditional promise as a reason for proceeding with the Wiluna railway? One of the main reasons why it is desired to construct the

Wiluna line is because of the production of gold from that centre. Gold must be produced on a profitable basis for it to be of any use to the country. If it cannot be produced profitably the industry cannot go on. When we consider the economic conditions now prevailing, the history of this mine, the difficulties that have been experienced in the treatment of the ore, they must give rise in our minds to some perplexity. We must remember that the ore in the Wiluna mine is of low grade. A perusal of the report of the State Mining Engineer reveals the fact that he has made no definite statement that the difficulties of the past have been overcome, and that the venture, under the conditions prevailing in this State, will be a profitable one. We are faced with what is practically a 40s. ore. The tonnage, in Australian terms, is considered large. Roughly speaking, 400,000 tons of ore have been treated, though I doubt whether it was profitably treated. The ore reserves are supposed to represent a value of about £1,000,000 per 100 feet of depth. If this venture were comparable with that in the Transvaal instanced by Mr. Cornell, or with that big mining venture in Canada of which we have recently heard, we might view the matter in a different light. There has been a great mining revival in Canada, and according to a recent Press report, the Government of that country has gone to the assistance of a large mining corporation there, which has made arrangements to develop its mine by the expenditure of £10,000,000. The population there is 4,000. On that understanding the Canadian Government have agreed to build 84 miles of railway. The Government Engineer in that country reports that the value of gold and copper in sight is estimated to be £40,000,000. Is the Wiluna proposition in any way comparable to that? Amongst other points we have to consider is the one that if there happens to be a slight increase in the cost of living, brought about by an increase in the tariff, which is not at all unlikely in view of our experience of the past 10 years, and that was followed by a consequent increase in the wages set out in the awards of the Arbitration Court, the small margin of profit estimated to exist in this case would vanish. Take another phase. We are concerned with the technical reports published from time to

time in the daily Press as to this Wiluna venture and those associated with it. For comparison I, unfortunately, must mention that one of the advisers closely associated with the Wiluna proposition is also in charge of, and has been responsible for, as freely stated in the public Press, the establishment at the Lake View and Star Mine of "the most modern economical treatment plant." This plant, when it got going, was to yield very substantial profits from low grade ore. I believe—and I have followed the matter closely—that the Lake View and Star was to come into operation, and be producing with this most modern mill and cheap power, something like 18 months or two years ago. In anticipation of the results to be obtained, the shares gradually rose in the market from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d., in round figures. I have not seen any returns which have shown profitable production by the Lake View and Star. Certainly the company is one with a heavy incubus in its capitalisation, which means that a considerable amount of money is needed before there can be disbursements to the shareholders.

Hon. H. Seddon: Have you seen any returns which led you to form any definite opinion regarding that mine?

Hon. H. STEWART: Any returns that I have seen are not in accordance with the statements made in earlier years as to the results obtainable and the shares have sagged to 1s. 6d. We are unfortunately in this position as to the Bill: if we can, we must cite comparable instances, and cite authorities in order that we may appreciate what ground we have for concluding that in the present instance we ought to give a valuable authorisation for the expenditure of a considerable sum of money by the Government. Assuredly we should not do so unless we are convinced that the results will justify the expenditure, and justify it not only in respect of certain individuals. In connection with mining investments, where certain individuals are concerned, the State and the people as a whole may actually suffer, or at all events reap no benefit, while the persons in at the early stage, and knowing how to deal with such a matter, may obtain a considerable financial benefit notwithstanding that the proposition may never yield a dividend. Hon. members will fully realise that that is a fact in connection with a large percentage of the

mining propositions that come before the public. I have pointed out that some people connected with the Wiluna proposition have, in connection with the Lake View and Star, led the public to anticipate results which to date have not accrued. I shall pass to another illustration. Some time ago a new process for the treatment of copper ore was before the public. The Government investigated it—I refer to the Neville copper separation process. To that process the State Mining Engineer gave his benediction in at least the same degree as he has accorded it to the Wiluna proposal. A small plant was tried, and the results were regarded as satisfactory. A working plant was established at Ravensthorpe; and it can be proved by the records that Ministers and members of Parliament in connection with that working plant visualised great prosperity for the Whim Well, Ravensthorpe, and other complex or simple low grade propositions, which it was believed would be profitably treated by the Neville process. But that process, in spite of the Government endeavouring to assist in the matter, and in spite of favourable prognostications by the State Mining Engineer, is to-day, one may say, dead; no economic commercial result has come from it. The people concerned could not do what they said they could do. Moreover, a number of technical men associated with the industry, who were approached in the early stage, would have nothing to do with the Neville process. On the 12th December, 1922, Mr. Corboy asked the Minister for Mines—

1, In view of the successful experiments with the Neville copper separation process, are the Government doing anything to make that process available to all producers in this State? 2, If not, what do the Government intend to do in the matter? 3, Is it intended to use the process to obtain the produce from ore at present stacked in the Phillips River district?

The reply of the Minister for Mines was—

1, The Government are keeping in close touch with the company, which they have assisted with laboratory tests, and the company in turn are advising us of all matters of interest; but the point where a definite announcement can be made has not yet been reached in regard to the application of the process on a large scale. 2 and 3, Answered by No. 1.

I have not looked into the matter to ascertain whether the Government gave financial assistance, but I think a complete investiga-

tion would show that money was advanced out of the Mining Development Vote. There is no doubt, however, from the public utterances of one Minister and at least one member of Parliament, that the process was tried at Phillips River with results that were not satisfactory. The process did not accomplish what was expected of it. I cite those facts as an illustration that in connection with these propositions, although at a certain stage confident public statements may be made and a firm impression conveyed, one must be guarded and see that one is on reasonably safe ground. As another parallel instance of how the State's finances have suffered in connection with a commercial concern—though this is not altogether a mining proposition in the strict sense of the term—I mention the Lake Clifton lime deposits and the Lake Clifton railway. That proposition was embarked upon by the Government of the day without sufficient safeguards for the State, and without there being sufficient investigation to show that the reasons for the State entering upon a considerable expenditure were sound. Without labouring in detail the State Mining Engineer's report on the Wiluna mine, let me say that he has confirmed the values put forward. Considering the estimated value of the ore and the small margin of profit that will be available if the ore is successfully treated, the proposition is not one which, at the present stage, shows any great reason for the anticipation of profitable results. But there is the other aspect. There are the State Mining Engineer's observations on the treatment. The Wiluna mines have a treatment plant on a commercial basis—a pilot plant which is, I take it, a unit of the complete plant. This has been installed for a considerable time, and has been worked on a commercial basis. I cannot speak authoritatively on the subject further than to say that, according to my information, there is not sufficient justification from the experimental work to warrant that sectional plant being so increased as to make a main treatment plant on the lines of oil separation upon a commercial scale. The State Mining Engineer, to whom we, not being technical men but laymen, must look in this instance, says that there is no metallurgical difficulty. As one used to dealing with these reports knows, at times it is inadvisable to commit oneself too far, and advisable to safeguard oneself—though these remarks

are not intended to apply to the State Mining Engineer. That official writes—

There is no reason to fear any unusual metallurgical difficulty in getting a quite satisfactory extraction of gold from the Wiluna ore. It is to be expected that concentration by flotation, followed by roasting and cyaniding of the concentrates, can be made to give an even better and cheaper economical result than the standard sulphide treatment by roasting the whole of the ore before cyaniding; but the latter can be relied upon for very successful results if flotation should not come up to expectations.

That, as the considered opinion of a technician on such a proposition, where the margin of profit is small, is certainly not sufficiently definite to be a guide to us. It does not say that the metallurgical difficulties have been overcome. About 1892, in Tasmania, the Mt. Lyell mine was discovered as a gold mine—it had an iron cap that was auriferous—but was speedily found to be a sulphide body carrying about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of copper. I must be brief on this phase, and do not propose to deal with the discovery of the rich pipe silver ore (Fahl ore) that led to the flotation of the mine. The question was how to treat the mine as a low grade copper proposition, there being $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of copper, and a couple of ounces of silver and a pennyweight of gold to the ton. Directors of the mine went to America and there got hold of Richard Sticht, then practically an unknown man, who specialised in pyritic smelting and had charge of the first plant of that type in the United States. Briefly, he was a highly trained man without much experience. The Mt. Lyell directors brought him to Tasmania as metallurgist to the Mt. Lyell mine, and he inaugurated an absolutely new departure in copper smelting, making the sulphur in the ore provide, by burning, the heat required to smelt the copper ore. He came there under agreement, having convinced himself, by experiments, of the feasibility of what he undertook to do. He had been recommended to the Mt. Lyell directors by Professor Peters, then looked upon as the highest metallurgical authority in the world on copper smelting. Professor Peters advised the Mt. Lyell directors to go and see Sticht. Sticht undertook to make the treatment successful. He did not hedge in any way, but told the directors he could smelt the low-grade ore at a profit. In this instance we are justified in asking for something more definite

than is before us to-day. The Wiluna metallurgical proposition is not new; it is one that has exercised the minds of metallurgists for years. On this ground alone we are justified in asking for very definite information before granting the authorisation for which the Bill asks. Wiluna is not the only difficult metallurgical proposition. There were, for instance, the complex ores of Bethanga in Victoria, from which was extracted a certain amount of gold, the pick of the mine being taken. The mine contains gold, copper, lead, zinc, and sulphur, and has proved too complex a proposition to be solved even by sending to Germany; it has proved too complex for any metallurgist in the world. No one has been able to determine what is the proper method of treatment for Bethanga. Then there is the Mt. Reid, a huge mine on the West Coast of Tasmania. There is also the Rosebery mine, on the West Coast of Tasmania, now being handled by the Zinc Corporation. The Rosebery has proved almost an insoluble problem for the metallurgist. These mines have been held under lease and have been tried for about 30 years; yet the world's metallurgists to-day, even with the incoming of the flotation process, of electrical deposition and of the various technical and scientific improvements which have been made during that long period, are not able to deal with the Mt. Reid ore deposits and are only just beginning to get extraction from the Rosebery mine. In dealing with these matters I am simply pointing out to the House that the Wiluna proposition is not unique from the metallurgical aspect. Indeed, another counterpart, and in this same State, is the Lancefield. The position is that scientific developments are such as to require that difficult metallurgical propositions must wait until the further progress of those developments enables them to be successfully handled. I do not desire to debate this matter at undue length, nor do I wish to enter too deeply upon the technical phases. All I wish to be assured of is that sufficient information is before the House to justify us in authorising the construction of the line. If the Wiluna proposition is really valuable, we should consider the history of the manganese deposits in this State. The State Mining Engineer estimated that there were 18 million tons of manganese ore easily available and he furnished figures to indicate

what a splendid profit could be made if the manganese were disposed of. We authorised the company to construct the line. At the time I pointed out that we were giving away a valuable asset and I rather demurred at granting a concession that would not be used for a number of years. We knew that our action would be of assistance to the company in floating the proposition. When we granted the necessary authority for the construction of the Meekatharra-Horseshoe railway, we inserted a proviso that the company should begin the construction within two years.

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the Wiluna railway and to refer to other matters only incidentally as having a bearing upon the Bill.

Hon. H. STEWART: I wish to indicate that the proposition before the House now could be dealt with similarly by giving the company authority to construct the railway and to point out the assistance rendered by the Government under similar conditions. In addition to the provision that the Meekatharra-Horseshoe railway was to be commenced within two years, we also stipulated that operations were to continue to the satisfaction of the Engineer-in-Chief and that the line was to be completed within three years of the time of commencement. That would have meant the line would have been completed in 1925. On the other hand, I believe it has only just been completed. The point I wish to make is that the Wiluna Company need have no fear of the Government treating them drastically. On the contrary, the Government would allow them reasonable latitude in connection with any concession obtained. The report of the Auditor General shows that the W.A. Manganese Company received £73,704 from the Government for advances for rails and fastenings, freights, etc., in connection with the construction of the railway. That indicates that the Government are willing to assist people who have a concession such as that under consideration now. Dealing with this advance, the Auditor General says—

This advance was made under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915, to enable the company to purchase material for the construction of a railway line (85 miles) from Meekatharra to Horseshoe, near Peak Hill, under the Meekatharra-Horseshoe Railway Act, 1920. As security for the advance, the company entered into an agreement under which the material used in the construction of the line

became the property of the Government. As from 1st July, 1928, the company has agreed to pay off the principal in 40 half-yearly equal instalments. The agreed rate of interest on the advance is $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum.

That is an indication to any company, such as that operating at Wiluna, that they can rely upon sympathetic treatment from the Government. If the Minister cannot answer the query that has been put to him during the debate, as to whether the money to be made available for the construction of the Wiluna railway is to be cheap money at the rate of $1\frac{1}{4}$ or $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., under the migration scheme, that in itself will be sufficient justification for postponing action. We ought to be told whether the Migration Commission and Mr. Bankes Amery have inspected the proposition as they did the agricultural proposals in the South-West division. If that has not been done, this matter should be postponed until the Commission and Mr. Amery have had an opportunity to look into it. It seems to me that the Government would not be safe in embarking upon this undertaking if we cannot get satisfactory information on the points that have been raised. I do not think anything will be lost if there is a postponement for the time being. In the light of past experience, we should ask for more substantial guarantees and more definite information regarding future prospects that we have received so far. The State Mining Engineer in his summary at the conclusion of his report, points out that the prospects are based not entirely upon ore reserves, but upon the obtaining of a successful and economic method of treatment—he does not say that it has been obtained—and he also brings in social issues apart from technical aspects. After all, in this instance it is almost entirely a technical matter, because if it is not economically successful, the proposal before us will be merely a temporary expedient to deal with a certain phase of the industry. Incidentally, the State Mining Engineer in the course of his summary says—

(5) The company is understood to have very strong financial support able to provide development and equipment of the mines in the most efficient manner, provided that the Government will give connection with the State railway system.

(6) The company's operations will require employment of about 800 men, and will give the town of Wiluna a population of about 4,000 persons.

(7) The freights for the mines and passenger and goods traffic for 4,000 people

should make a railway to Wiluna a profitable addition to the State railway system.

For the various reasons stated the authorisation of the Meekatharra-Wiluna railway is a matter that depends entirely upon the economic success of the mining proposition, taking into consideration all the circumstances.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.43]: I do not care to cast a silent vote on this Bill. Unless the Chief Secretary can assure me that the Government have reached a stage at which their expert officers are quite satisfied that the ore can be handled profitably, I cannot vote for the second reading of the Bill. No experience teaches like one's own experience. At least 25 years ago I was associated with a mine in the locality under discussion. The mine was known as the Bellevue. In the laboratory we could get analyses that would astound any mining community in the world, but when we tried to treat ore in bulk, we found it impossible to get anything like profitable results. We brought to the State a man of French extraction, who was highly qualified. The proposition broke his heart and he subsequently died. We got another highly qualified man and he in time was carried away on a shutter, or on a stretcher. Then we secured the services of another highly qualified man from Broken Hill. He was a man who had solved all the problems that had confronted the mines there.

Member: Where was the mine?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The mine I refer to was within 100 miles of Wiluna.

Hon. H. Seddon: Then that is no criterion.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The ore was similar.

Hon. H. Seddon: No, it was not.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The services of that man were procured because he had solved all the problems at Broken Hill. After battling with the mine for some months, we woke up one morning to the fact that he had committed suicide in the mine. He had found the job too much for him. That is the experience I had 25 years ago. While the ore contained any amount of gold, a process that would deal with it could not be found.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order! The hon. member will resume his seat. As a confer-

ence with the managers of the Legislative Assembly is to take place at 4.45 p.m., I will leave the Chair until the managers are ready to report to the House, at which stage the bells will be rung.

Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 5.17 p.m.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Conference Managers' Report.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [5.47]: I have to report that the managers have met and have agreed that the Council's amendment be amended by the insertion after the word "may" in line 5 of the proposed new Section 147 (a) of the words "with the consent of the secretary of the department" and that the proposed new section, as amended, be agreed to. I move—

That the report be adopted.

HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHLAIN (Metropolitan-Suburban): [5.48]: May we have the section as amended read to us so that we shall understand the effect of the conference decision?

The **PRESIDENT**: It is customary to adopt, without question, the report of managers who are appointed as plenipotentiaries from the House. Putting the question that the report be adopted is really only a matter of form.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.49]: A new section was inserted to permit of a person, who was arrested say, at Albany, for non-compliance with a maintenance order at Perth, to be taken before the court at Albany in respect to the enforcement of the order. The Assembly amended the Council's amendment by providing that that might be done with the consent of the complainant. The Council considered that the complainant was the last person to be asked for consent, because collusion might enter. A woman might have her husband conveyed to Perth to save the train fare and then withdraw the case. Instead of providing for the consent of the complainant the conference has provided for the consent of the secretary of the department.

Question put and passed

Assembly's Further Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the recommendation of the conference.

BILL—AUDIT ACT AMENDMENT.*Assembly's Further Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to a conference on the Council's amendment to the Audit Act Amendment Bill, had appointed the Hons. P. Collier, J. C. Willecock and Sir James Mitchell managers, and had fixed the time and place of the conference at 7.30 p.m. in the Speaker's room.

BILL—MEEKATHARRA-WILUNA RAILWAY.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (Continuing) [5.50]: I was pointing out that one's own experience is the best of all guides. I was explaining the difficulty that had confronted the mining community in endeavouring to treat some of the ore in the locality referred to. If the practical advisers of the Government had satisfied us that the ore could be successfully treated, I should have no great objection to offer to the Bill, but there appears to be a doubt in everyone's mind, not as to the existence of gold at Wiluna, but whether the ore can be treated to give profitable returns. In the absence of definite information on the point the House would be wise to postpone consideration of the Bill until next session. We in this State have had experience that should impress upon us the necessity for exercising care in a matter of this kind. I need only instance the Lake Clifton railway. We were told there existed at Lake Clifton an unlimited deposit that contained 98 per cent. pure lime. Though it was possible to get 98 per cent. in the laboratory, when the promoters came to treat it in bulk, it proved to be an impossible proposition. We know what happened then. The railway was abandoned.

Hon. H. Stewart: And the State lost £70,000.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The company got out and the State got in. The railway was pulled up and the cost was lost to the State. There is another point that I should like the Chief Secretary to clear up. I am under the impression that for some years there has been an honourable understanding that railways should be constructed according to the order in which they were authorised by Parliament. According to precedence of authorisation, so railways were to be constructed. If that is so, I am at a loss to understand when the time will arrive for the construction of the Meekatharra-Wiluna railway. It certainly will not be within a space of five or seven years.

Hon. H. Stewart: Is not there a condition in the agreement with the company that the construction of the railway shall be started immediately?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am asking the Chief Secretary whether the honourable understanding is to be adhered to, or whether we are being asked to pass this Bill so that the railway may be constructed and the company may proceed with the work. If it is not intended to build the line out of its order, members must recognise the position in which we shall be placing the mining company. They will have Parliamentary authorisation for the building of a line that may not be constructed for many years, and by the time its construction is completed the chances are that the company and all their promises will be things of the past. The very fact of Parliament authorising the railway will enable the company to sell their shares. I understand it was announced in the Press that the shares would be placed on the market in the new year. Imagine it going forth to the world that the State has undertaken to build 100 miles of railway to connect up the one mine at Wiluna! What would be the result when the shares were put on the market shortly afterwards? I am afraid we should witness a repetition of what happened with the Lake Clifton railway—that the promoters would be out and the State would be left in.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Indirectly it would be a certificate that the mine was good.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the Bill be passed we should insert some proviso that the construction of the line is contingent upon the technical advisers of the Government being perfectly satisfied that the Wiluna ore can be profitably treated. There should be something more than a statement at an inter-

view between the directors of the company and the Agent General of the State in London that so much money has been put into the mine and that so much more is to be expended. The additional money should be put up before the State is committed to the building of the railway.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the Bill passes the second reading it should be provided that the Government's expert advisers must first be satisfied that the gold can be successfully extracted from the ore. The question of cheap money for building the line does not appeal to me at all. I am rather afraid of cheap money; it is an encouragement to extravagance. It is likely to tempt us to embark on ventures simply because the money is cheap. All said and done, the money is cheap for only a few years and the years have a knack of passing very quickly. No matter how cheap the interest rate may be, the principal sum has to be repaid sooner or later. I shall require to be satisfied on the points I have mentioned before I can bring myself to vote for the second reading of the Bill.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [6.0]: In addressing a few remarks to the Bill, may I say at the outset that I intend to give my support to the proposal. It is rather interesting to note the attitude of hon. members towards this railway, because this is the first time a mining railway has been brought before Parliament for a good many years. I intend to revive in the minds of hon. members the circumstances leading up to the proposal to construct the railway. The Chief Secretary has already pointed out that assurances have been given by a previous Government that if the company opened up the mine, and satisfied that Government that there was available for treatment a certain quantity of ore of value, and the company were prepared to treat that ore, the Government would be prepared to carry out the obligation that was theirs and establish the necessary railway communication. On that question there has been no uncertainty at all, and whilst the House, very rightly, is desirous of being satisfied that the project would be financially successful I think when members have heard the whole of the evidence, and realise the work the company have done, they will understand that the company are not asking Parliament to step into financial commitment it will not be justified in under-

taking. Anyone who has visited Wiluna will realise the extent of the field. It has been definitely proved that over a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles there exist strong ore bodies. The Wiluna company have taken over leases which extend over this length, and they have opened up on two leases, ore bodies, one known as the western lode, opened to a depth of 290ft., and the eastern lode to a depth of 190ft. One lode has been opened up over a length of 1,600ft., and the other over a length of 1,200ft. The report of the State Mining Engineer gives the exact details. Not only have the company opened up this length of lode at the 200ft level, and the other lode at the 300ft. and 100ft. level, but also have provided a plant consisting of a 10-head battery with all necessary equipment for the treatment of the ore, thus ensuring what will be recognised as a test on a working scale of both flotation, direct roasting and the treatment of fume by electrical precipitation of metallic dust. There are many mines in this country which at present are operating whose maximum plant is only a 10-head battery, so that hon. members will see that the trial carried out at Wiluna is being carried out on practically a working scale. The method of investigation first undertaken was to try out the flotation process. The second step was to try out the treatment obtaining in Kalgoorlie, the roasting of the whole of the ore. Now a third treatment is being tried, a new process (the Lodge Cottrell) with a view to still further increasing the recovery of gold in the ore. I would like briefly to explain the treatment processes the ore has to go through before the gold can be extracted. First we have the free milling of ore which does not require any special metallurgical treatment. This ore is crushed in a stamp battery, and the gold is set free by this means. After being ground to a fine degree, it is treated with a cyanide solution, and by that means the gold is extracted. High extractions have been obtained by this method. The process for dealing with refractory ores is very different and depends upon the nature of the ore. At the Gwalia mine the method of treatment that I have just described is followed, that is the wet treatment. There is no roasting. With regard to the Kalgoorlie ores, however, it is necessary, on account of the presence of both telluride and refractory sulphide, that these ores shall be treated in a different way. The

ore containing telluride and sulphide, up to the present, has been treated only by roasting the whole of the product. An attempt was made to obtain a concentrate, but unfortunately the process adopted did not prove successful, and it has been found necessary to roast the whole of the ore. In order to get a satisfactory roast, it is necessary that this ore be crushed dry. The ore is put through a ball mill, crushed to powder, and subjected to gentle heating, which converts the sulphide into a sulphate, thus enabling the roasted ore to be treated with cyanide, as I previously stated. The flotation process for the treatment of ores is recent and it is really adapted to the wet method of treatment. The ore is crushed in the ordinary way and then it is passed through a cell where it is mixed with a certain amount of oil. The oil brings up the sulphide mixed with it in the form of a scum which comes to the surface of the cell. The scum is then scraped off the surface, and it contains the whole of the sulphide contents of the ore. The gold is intimately mixed with the sulphide and when you recover by sulphide flotation, you also recover the gold content. There is one difficulty associated with the flotation process which has militated against its adaptation to the treatment of ores in Western Australia. It is found that although the oil will float the sulphide, it will not float the free gold. The consequence is that where you have free gold contents, the free gold is left behind and you get a high residue. Coming back to Wiluna, tests were made first of all with the flotation process. If hon. members will refer to the report of the State Mining Engineer, they will see the results that were obtained with that process at the Wiluna mine. First of all, on referring to Appendix IV. on page 30, members will see that reference is made to difficulties that were experienced in dealing with oxidised ore. The State Mining Engineer writes—

The earlier operations on these mines were entirely on the weathered or oxidised portions of the ore bodies, and the experience has been that ordinary battery and cyanide treatment has not been satisfactory in obtaining a good extraction of the gold. Most of the tailing, however, has been retreated with good results by finer grinding and again cyaniding, and it would appear that the gold in the ore is mostly in very minute particles, liable to remain sealed up in the larger particles of the lode matter, and requiring very fine grinding before it can be set free. The oxidised ore is

also of a very clayey nature, and makes much sticky slime, which is difficult to treat by filtration processes.

The Mining Engineer goes on to refer to certain analyses made of the Wiluna ore, and he points out on page 32 that the sulphide content of the ore in three analyses given, there is an average content of arsenic 0.57, sulphur content 1.66, arsenopyrite of 1.23, and ordinary pyrite 2.65 per cent. Hon. members will see that there is no less than 7.68 per cent. of sulphur content in this ore. The difficulty at Wiluna has been to satisfactorily treat ore which contains arsenic and, as Mr. Stewart pointed out, the same difficulty exists with regard to the Lancefield mine. Owing to the presence of arsenic in the ore, there is a loss of gold in the roasting. Arsenic in the course of roasting is driven off in the form of a fume which passes into the flue. The water with which the ore is treated at Wiluna contains a high percentage of salt, and this salt together with the arsenic has the effect of causing a chemical action with the gold and it is carried away in the fumes. One of the attempts made in the early days to treat the ores at Wiluna was by the volatilisation process. Mr. Howe mixed the ore with a certain amount of salt and in roasting, the gold combined with the chlorine of the salt, thus forming trichloride of gold, which was carried off with the fumes. Unfortunately Mr. Howe had not made satisfactory arrangements to catch the fumes, and he was successful in driving off the whole of the gold but lost it through its passing into the atmosphere. The next experiment at Wiluna was with the intention of recovering gold carried over with the gas into the flue. For this purpose the company installed the Lodge Cottrell electrical precipitation process. That process has been employed in Eastern Australia and also in America with great success in the treatment of zinc and lead ores. I read an article recently in which that process was advocated, and it was pointed out that every metal had been recovered to a more or less extent by its utilisation. If I may divert for a moment I may describe the apparatus. There are placed a series of vertical plates in the flue through which gas is passed. Between the plates there is a wire suspended. The wire is connected to the positive terminal of a very high tension electrical generator. The plates

are connected to the negative terminal, and a certain amount of electricity passes over from the wire through the gases to the plates. The mineral that is in the fumes is charged by the positive electricity passing from the wire to the plate, and being so charged, it is repelled by the plate and it falls upon the bed of the flue in the form of fine dust, and can be recovered. The results of experiments in the Eastern States have been very satisfactory; there has been obtained a high recovery of the metal content of the ore by this process, and it is proposed by the Wiluna company to apply it to the treatment of the Wiluna ores in order that they might increase the percentage recovery of gold from those ores. Referring again to the report of the State Mining Engineer, he points out—

The arsenopyrite, however, is very closely associated with the gold contents of the ore, and even prolonged treatment with cyanide solutions and very fine grinding have been unsuccessful in obtaining a satisfactory gold extraction. It has been found, therefore, that roasting of the arsenical sulphide ores is a practical necessity in order to get a good extraction of the gold. It is still a matter of balancing of costs to ascertain whether it will pay best to dry crush and roast the whole of the ore, as is the most usual treatment in vogue at Kalgoorlie, with subsequent regrinding, amalgamation and cyaniding of the roasted ore, or to adopt the alternative of wet crushing and concentration, with roasting of the concentrates.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 8.15 p.m.

AUDIT ACT AMENDMENT.

Conference Managers' Report.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have to report that the conference met and made progress and decided to adjourn until tomorrow at 2 p.m. I move—

That this report be adopted.

Question put and passed.

BILL—MEEKATHARRA-WILUNA RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Prior to the suspension of the sitting I was reading an extract from the report of the State Mining Engineer in reference to the roasting of the

arsenical sulphide ores. May I at this point digress a little to refer to what was quoted by Mr. Holmes regarding the Bellevue mine. The ore in that mine, I understand, is affected by the presence of copper. Copper has the effect of destroying the cyanide solution and preventing the cyanide from taking up the gold. That is the explanation of the difficulty in dealing with the ore in the Bellevue mine. That is one illustration of what may possibly be an application of the flotation process. Because where flotation is applied to ore such as that in the Bellevue mine, the copper and the sulphide would be concentrated by the flotation, and it is quite probable that by these means the gold content in the Bellevue mine may yet be recovered. Reverting to the report by the State Mining Engineer, I was reading an extract that pointed to the effect of the arsenical sulphide ores. Mr. Montgomery goes on to quote the actual results of experiments made with the working plant at Wiluna. He says—

The following figures were given to me as an example of the progress being attained. The average assay value of the ore treated being 36s. per ton, concentrates 233.51s., and tailing 10s., the percentage of concentrates works out to balance, at 11.633 per cent. and of tailing 88.367 per cent., thus—

Concentrates	11.633	at	233.51	0	=	2,716.4	=	75.5
Tailing	88.367	„	10	0	=	883.6	=	24.5
Ore	100.000	„	36	0	=	3,600.0	=	100.0

The concentrates in this case thus contained 75.5 per cent. of the original value of the ore, and the tailing 24.5 per cent., and the proportion of the original ore value saved in each cell works out as follows:—

Cell.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total.
Percentage of total recovered value ...	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	61.2	17.5	7.9	5.0	2.6	2.0	1.3	2.0	99.5
Percentage of original ore value ...	48.2	13.2	6.0	3.8	2.0	1.5	1.0	1.5	75.5

The loss in tailing of 10s. per ton of tailing (sav 9s. of original ore) is still too high, and efforts are being made to reduce it. In experimental work on a small scale it has been found possible to reduce tailing assays below 4s. per ton, and I do not think it will be very long before means are devised of getting even better results than this by the flotation method on a working scale."

In connection with the 10s. value of the residue there is no doubt that any free gold

residues in this ore will be left behind in the tailings. As an illustration of dealing with free gold, may I point out that at the time of the Gwalia fire the Gwalia mine kept going by treating the sands left over from previous treatment, and made a profit of 2s. 6d. per ton on sands carrying a gold value of 10s. 6d. per ton. The greater part of the sulphide has evidently been concentrated out this tailing and therefore it should be fairly amenable to treatment by cyanidation. Mr. Montgomery continues—

The amount of concentrate obtained is averaging about 10 per cent. of the weight of ore milled, and contains about 9.40 per cent. of metallic arsenic, equal to 20.43 per cent. of arsenopyrite. The total sulphur in the crude ore was given to me as 3.43 per cent.

In a table of analyses of ore it is pointed out that there is something like 7.68 per cent. of sulphides in this ore, and that the concentrates contain 20.43 per cent. of arsenopyrite which would mean 44.01 per cent. of pyrite, or 64.44 per cent. of the combined sulphide if the two sulphides concentrate equally well, which may or may not be the case. Mr. Montgomery continues —

In the absence of direct analyses of the ore milled and the concentrates, it would seem therefore from such other figures as we have in hand that the concentrate is likely to be about 64 per cent. sulphides and 36 per cent. gangue, which would be a fairly normal figure for concentrates. The ratio of crude ore to concentrates is taken roundly to be about 10 to 1, but in the foregoing calculations it was found that 11.633 per cent. of concentrates were required to balance the assay results, which is a concentration of only 8.6 to 1. Taking the ratio of concentration as 8.6 to 1, the 7.69 per cent. of mixed sulphides taken to be in the crude ore would account for $7.69 \times 8.6 = 66.1$ per cent. of sulphides in the product, if all the sulphides were saved. No doubt more complete and exact figures will soon be available which will enable it to be seen more precisely what proportions of the sulphides and gold in the original ore are recovered in the concentrate, and to what extent the unrecovered gold is locked up in the earthy part of the tailing and in the sulphides left therein respectively. The treatment by flotation is still largely in an experimental stage, and it is too early to found conclusions as to its final success on the results as yet available.

The sulphide concentrate is being roasted in an Edwards' roasting furnace, and the manager has informed me that this part of the treatment operation is going on very successfully, giving a well oxidised product from which the gold is readily obtainable by cyaniding.

If it should prove that the flotation treatment does not succeed in making a high enough extraction of the gold, the alternative is always open to dry-crushing the ore and roast-

ing it as a whole before finally crushing to slime and extracting the gold by cyanide treatment, with or without amalgamation. This is the existing standard Kalgoorlie method, and can be relied upon for a satisfactory gold extraction at costs comparable with those of the mills there. The first cost of this style of plant, however, will be very much greater than that for flotation treatment of the total ore, followed by treatment of a greatly reduced quantity of concentrates, say, about a tenth only of the original tonnage, and it will require close analysis of all costs of both processes to enable it to be finally determined which method will be the greater economical success when all cost factors are taken into consideration.

May I point out in explanation that whereas under the old Kalgoorlie method the whole of the ore is roasted, the flotation method permits of the roasting of only one-tenth, which offers a great economy. There is another factor, however, referred to by the State Mining Engineer which may have an effect on the mining costs at Wiluna. He points out the effect of the quantity of arsenic contained in the ore. He says--

Arsenopyrite contains 75/163 of its weight of metallic arsenic and 32/163 of sulphur, and 2.44 per cent. of arsenopyrite would, therefore, mean 1.12 per cent. of metallic arsenic and 0.48 per cent. of sulphur per ton of crude ore. Pyrite contains 8/15 of its weight of sulphur. So 5.24 per cent. of pyrite in the ore would correspond with 2.79 per cent. of sulphur, making a total of 3.27 per cent. of sulphur in it from both minerals.

The State Mining Engineer pointed out that every hundred tons of ore roasted would put out 1.84 tons of white arsenic in the atmosphere, and ten tons of sulphuric acid. He continues—

It is expected that the mine will treat about 1,000 tons of ore a day, which would involve the discharge from the furnaces daily of 14.8 tons of white arsenic and 100.1 tons of sulphuric acid. The London quotation for white arsenic of May 17th, 1927, was £16 a ton, and at this price the daily production of white arsenic, if it could all be saved, would be worth £237, equal to 4s. 9d. per ton of ore treated. The expenses of putting white arsenic on the market would, however, be heavy, and probably a production of nearly 15 tons a day would depress the price materially and would be difficult for the market to absorb. The figures are, however, useful as a reminder that the arsenic content is of considerable value and that Cottrell precipitation of arsenic from the furnace fumes, besides being necessary for the health of residents in the vicinity of the mine, would probably more than pay for its cost.

It might be well if members understood why the tailings are so high in value. I

refer to the fact that free gold is not carried over by flotation.

Hon. H. Stewart: The report of the State Mining Engineer leaves that as not finally decided. I refer to the matter of the distribution of the gold in the tailings, and the complete extraction of sulphide.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I understand that point has been gone into by the State Mining Engineer by means of experiments. These experiments have shown that the ore treated by the flotation process at Wiluna was a mixture of oxidised and sulphide ore. Consequently the conditions of flotation were obscured by the presence of the oxidised ore. I understand that the flotation process is a success when dealing with pure sulphide ore. It is probable that the high percentage of gold obtained in the tailings was the result of the mixture of oxidised and sulphide ore treated in the experimental plant. I now wish to refer to a definite statement which appeared in the report of the State Mining Engineer. This is information which members are doubtless anxious to receive to help them in making up their minds how to deal with this Bill. On page 3 of his report the State Mining Engineer says--

Ordinary prudence, however, demands that a work of this magnitude should be guaranteed by preliminary proof that the district for which the railway is to be constructed is in possession of mining resources which can be relied upon to maintain an output of payable ore commensurate with the magnitude of the State's investment in the railway. The Wiluna Gold Mines, Limited, claim that they have given this, the chairman stating at their annual meeting on 7th April last that they had spent for the year ended 31st December, 1926, a sum of £34,338 14s. on mine development, and £21,222 18s. 5d. on plant and machinery, and had developed 329,600 short tons of ore, averaging 39s. 4d. per ton assay value. My examination of the mine was for the purpose of checking the company's estimates of value as far as practicable so as to see how far their reckoning of the size and gold contents of the lode could be confirmed, and in addition to ascertain their proposals as to methods of working the mine and treating the ore therefrom, so as to see if there is a reliable prospect of the work being carried on profitably.

It being clearly impracticable to make a complete resampling of the whole mine without much larger expenditure of time and money than seemed justified, the next best way of verifying the results obtained by the company was to check a considerable portion of the work already done by its management, enough to make certain that their published statements of values were not overstated. If the recorded results were found to be confirmed by independent check sampling and assays in a rea-

sonably large number of cases, the whole of them might be accepted as reliable and taken at full face value.

After consultation with the management, it was decided that the best check on the mine sampling and assays would be to repeat it in the sulphide zone in as many as practicable of the crosscuts which have been made at frequent intervals across the ore-bearing ground. The sampling cuts were made, as far as possible, across the faces of ore cut through by the crosscuts at the same places at which the mine samplers had taken their cuts. The mine sampling system was found to be very complete, tests being taken from the faces of the drives and crosscuts every two feet as the work progressed, and repeated later on at two-foot intervals and in two-foot widths by cutting chip samples across the drives. In the crosscuts the mine samplers take cuts in two-foot widths on both sides of the crosscut, but in checking we usually took only the south side of each crosscut. The tests of the west lode were over two-foot widths, but in the east lode, pressure of time made us take them in three-foot widths. The method of chip sampling is the one almost universally used throughout the large mines of the State, and gives excellent results when the tests are averaged over a considerable number of samples, but it is usual to find quite large discrepancies between individual samplings taken along the same cuts, due to the small amount of ore broken out and its great variability in value. The greater the number of tests taken, however, the more concurrence can be relied upon in the average results, and in comparing the tabulated comparisons in the appendices to this report of my sampling and that of the mine, more importance should be given to agreement of averages than to the assay results of individual samples. The latter frequently show large differences in tests taken at the same points, but it will be seen that it is sometimes the one and sometimes the other sampling which gives the higher results, and that the more they are combined and averaged the more closely do they agree. The final summary of 133 assays happens to result in exactly the same total average figure value in both series of tests, viz., 33s. 0d. per short ton. The short ton is taken, and values to the nearest shilling, to agree with the practice which has been followed by the mine on its assay plans. A table is also appended, however, showing our individual assay results in ozs. dwts. and grs. per standard ton of 2,240 lbs., as returned by the Government laboratory. The value of fine gold has been taken at full mint parity when expressing it in money, viz., one ounce fine is equal to £4,244.73, as in the State Gold and Mineral Statistics, and a return of one ounce fine per standard ton of 2,240 lbs. is equal to £3,792.6 (= £3 15s. 10d.) per short ton of 2,000 lbs.

The Wiluna mines leases are not confined to those containing the above-mentioned mining excavations, and extend for over a mile north of them, turning more and more to the east as they are followed northward through the "Happy Jack" and "Bulletin" holdings, on both of which there are strong lodes from which a considerable amount of ore has already been raised, and no doubt a quite large out-

put could be obtained when mines upon them have been opened and equipped with winding and pumping plant. To end of 1926 the "Happy Jack" is recorded as producing 743 standard tons of ore, giving 236.41 ounces of fine gold, and the "Bulletin" 11,392 standard tons, yielding 3,572.63 ounces of fine gold. It should be simple to arrange for treatment of the ore at the company's main mill. It is very probable that the lodes running through the company's holdings will be found to contain workable ore at various points along their length, which might add considerably to the available ore supplies.

In addition tests were made to show to what depths the ore existed. The report continues:—

The 290 feet level from new shaft is as yet the deepest in the company's mine, and it is seen from the foregoing part of this report that there has been very little, if any, difference in the value of the lodestuff there as compared with that formerly worked above 100 feet level. There are good geological reasons for concluding that the ore now being worked was originally formed at a great depth from surface, and therefore that it may be reasonably expected to maintain a considerable degree of constancy of value in depth.

The diamond-drill boring which has been done is not so conclusive as we should like it to be on this aspect of the subject, but shows that the lodes give frequent good assay values as far down as they have yet been tested, about 750 feet vertically. Details of the boring are given in Appendix No. III. On the whole the bores may be said to confirm the evidence of the levels, and show that like values exist to the lowest depths attained by them, so that the conclusions as to size and value of the ore-bodies in the proved levels may be expected to hold good to seven or eight hundred feet at any rate, giving a reasonable probability of life for the mine at an output of 300,000 tons annually above the 800 feet level for something like ten years. There is no reason apparent why the lodes should not persist to like depths as at Kalgoorlie without much diminution of average values.

Metallurgical Treatment: Notes on this aspect of the subject are put up herewith in Appendix No. IV., and it is to be understood that a decision is still pending between two methods of treatment, the choice between which must be determined by trials as to which will give the better economical result, when all factors are taken into consideration. The concentration by the flotation method has not yet given quite satisfactory results on a working scale of 30 tons of ore per day, but laboratory experiments make it fairly certain that the extraction of gold can still be very materially improved. Failing this, however, the standard dry-crushing and all-roasting treatment, usual in Kalgoorlie practice, is capable of securing a very satisfactory rate of extraction at a reasonably low cost. There is not much room for reduction of the treatment costs of the standard practice in the best new mills at Kalgoorlie by any other method of treatment which has been suggested, but there is still

very much hope that the flotation method will enable some reduction of total working costs to be made, together with a very considerable reduction in capital costs of the treatment plant required, with concomitant advantages in doing away with the necessity for dry-crushing all the ore, with consequent formation of much dangerous dust which is difficult to remove thoroughly. The roasting of concentrates high in sulphur and arsenic also affords much better opportunity for eventual utilisation of by-products than when the whole of the ore has to be roasted.

Costs and Profits: It has been shown in the foregoing portion of this report that the average value of the ore bodies of the Wiluna Gold Mines, Limited, may be taken at about 40s. 0d. per short ton, from which it should be possible to obtain an extraction of about 36s. 0d. per ton. Allowing 4s. 0d. per ton for new development work to maintain the ore reserves well ahead of supplies for the mill, we should have 32s. 0d. per short ton to pay working costs, inclusive of redemption of capital and profits, and comparison with costs of other mines working in this State shows that it will be very far from easy to conduct all necessary operations within that sum with any margin of profit while conditions of transport to the mine remain as they are. Railway connection, however, would put a very different complexion on the problem, making working conditions very similar to those prevailing at Kalgoorlie, Leonora, and Meekatharra. If the Wiluna mines were at any of these centres, the advantages they would possess in the comparatively shallow depth at which they would be worked for quite ten years to come, and the great length and width of the ore bodies would permit them to be operated far more cheaply than any of the large mines now working at these centres, all of which are raising most of their ore from depths well over 1,000 feet. The modernised plants of the Lake View and Star and Sons of Gwalia mines have shown that it is possible to work these mines successfully on a grade of ore lower than that of the Wiluna gold mines, even though it is obtained largely from below 2,000 feet in depth. I have been given to understand that in the case of the Wiluna mines finance has been arranged so that it will be possible to put up a mining and treatment equipment of the most efficient and up-to-date character, and if this be so, there should be no difficulty in getting lower figures of costs per ton for many years to come than prevail in any of our large and deep mines at present. There is very great advantage, really, in the circumstances that the whole mining and treatment equipment have to be provided de novo, as there will be no excuse for putting in any but the most economically efficient machinery.

I have read these extracts from the report because I want to show how definitely the State Mining Engineer has committed himself to the possibilities surrounding the Wiluna Gold Mines, Ltd. The figures which have been taken with regard to Kalgoorlie mining costs have been founded on power plants which are recognised to be out of

date as compared with modern power practice. The power it is proposed to produce at Wiluna is primarily that derived from the use of Diesel engines. When we recognise that by the use of an efficient Diesel engine the thermal efficiency obtained varies between 28 and 32 per cent., and that the highest efficiency we can get from the steam power plants on the goldfields is in the region of nine per cent., we can see what a tremendous reduction in power costs are effected by the introduction of modern and up-to-date plant. This factor, together with advanced metallurgical treatment of ores, the adoption of the flotation and precipitation processes to mining previously referred to would seem to indicate the advantage to be gained by the testing out of the mines on modern lines. The Chief Secretary mentioned that the future of Western Australian mining is to a large extent locked up in the progress of this Wiluna mine. This company is treating what is generally recognised as a new field. Under modern conditions it is anticipated that it will give such results so far as working costs are concerned, that an inducement will be offered to investors in the Old Country once again to put their money into Western Australian mining. The results which are expected to be obtained, and which are shown by the State Mining Engineer to be entirely practicable and possible, must have a great effect upon the market, and upon the finding of capital for investment in our mines. When we realise, as I have pointed out before, the attitude that is adopted in London with regard to Western Australian mining, I think the House will be well advised to give serious consideration to this railway, especially when it involves such important possibilities to the future of the industry. May I make a few references to the evidence which has been placed before the Railway Advisory Board. Mr. Burvill this afternoon expressed himself rather warmly upon the remarks made by my colleague with regard to shipping and its relationship to what is recognised as the natural port for a district. I think the hon. member misunderstood Mr. Harris, who pointed out what are, unfortunately, the facts existing at present, not only in Western Australia but throughout Australia, with regard to the shipping position. In the report of the Engineer-in-Chief on the Fremantle

harbour it is pointed out that 93 per cent. of the inward cargo for Western Australia comes through Fremantle. When considering the claims of Geraldton as a port we have to recognise that this factor will not be affected by the opening of Geraldton as a port. The only possibility of advancing the port of Geraldton will be by means of direct shipments, and these can take place only when quantities and values of freight offering are such as to induce ships to go into that harbour.

Hon. H. Stewart: Why did the goldfields for ever so long agitate for the opening of Esperance harbour?

Hon. H. SEDDON: For exactly the same reason as the Geraldton people agitate for the opening of Geraldton harbour; but the fact has to be recognised that the control of inward shipping to Western Australia is in the hands of the shipping companies and the consignors abroad, who determine the routes by which cargoes are sent to Western Australia. As regards the shipping offering to Western Australia, better freights can be obtained to Fremantle than to outlying ports such as Geraldton and Esperance.

Hon. H. Stewart: The freight via Singapore is very little extra.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I went to the trouble of cabling for freight quotations to Fremantle via Singapore, and the replies I received indicate that there is a very much greater charge per ton involved in ordering goods via Singapore to Geraldton than in ordering them to Fremantle for transshipment to Geraldton.

Hon. H. Stewart: The difference is 10s. per ton.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The figures I have received certainly indicate a much greater difference. Perhaps I may in passing quote them—

London to Fremantle and Melbourne—63s. per ton.

Fremantle to Singapore—50s. per ton.

Singapore to Fremantle—

Bags—30s. per ton.

Cane—150s. per ton.

Cement—10s. per cask.

Coke—82s. 6d. per ton.

Rice—60s. per ton.

London to Singapore—

Provisions—75s. per ton.

Hardware—67s. 6d. per ton.

China—27s. 6d. per ton.

Undefined cargo—80s. per ton.

Freight from London to Singapore on hardware is quoted at 67s. 6d. per ton: that was the nearest I could get by way of making a comparison with the freight on machinery. However, the point made by my colleague was based on State statistics. Out of 82,000 tons of freight handled at Geraldton, 5,989 tons were inward cargo, of which the greater portion was transhipped from Fremantle. The great advantage, however, that Geraldton possesses—and I think this is the fact which influenced the Railways Advisory Board—is in the shipment of crude oil, which comes down the North-West coast and can therefore be shipped to Geraldton direct. Crude oil is estimated to comprise 50 per cent. of the mine's stores. Therefore the advantage gained by the Geraldton route is tremendous in respect of crude oils. However, I may instance here that in relation to other stores and household commodities, other factors operate. An analysis of the consumption of Western Australia shows that 50 per cent. of Western Australia's commodities are produced in the State; that is to say, 50 per cent. of the commodities consumed in Western Australia are produced in Western Australia. Among them are food and timber, which of course are handled by rail entirely. Then 23 per cent. of the commodities consumed in Western Australia come from the Eastern States, and comprise mainly foodstuffs, apparel and machinery; 27 per cent. come from overseas, of which 25 per cent. comprise foodstuffs, 23 per cent. apparel, and 25 per cent. machinery apart from other classes of commodities. Therefore, when we analyse the consumption of the mine we see that although 50 per cent. of mine stores, including crude oil, carry a considerable advantage, other stores come from Fremantle, and consequently Fremantle freights will have to be taken into consideration as well as freights from Geraldton direct. My colleague quoted certain advantages in freights via Meekatharra to Fremantle and via Leonora to Fremantle. I have taken from the railway rate book the figures relating to other classes of freight operating on these various routes. The saving to be made by going from Fremantle to Wiluna via Meekatharra is 6d. per ton on the special grain rate, 1s. 4d. per ton on Class A rate, 1s. 9d. per ton on Class B rate, 2s. 7d. per ton on Class C rate. 3s. 11d. per ton on

Class I. rate, 5s. 1d. per ton on Class II. rate, and 6s. 2d. per ton on Class III. rate. With regard to commodities coming from the Eastern States, being 23 per cent. of the total consumption, 42 per cent. comes from Victoria, 43 per cent. from New South Wales, 2 per cent. from Queensland, 11 per cent. from South Australia, and 1.5 per cent. from Tasmania. Thus it will be seen that the whole question of freighting to Wiluna has to be taken in comparison with the various percentages I have quoted: 10 per cent. of the total consumption will come from New South Wales, 9.6 per cent. from Victoria, 2.5 per cent. from South Australia, and so on. Under those circumstances it will be seen that the advantages to be gained from the Geraldton route are really confined almost entirely to the consumption of crude oil. The question of utilising the natural port for any district except in the case of export products is a matter really controlled by the shipping companies operating to Australia. I appeal to the House to give the Bill favourable consideration, if only on account of the fact that the whole future of Western Australian mining is intimately affected by the progress of Wiluna. The definite statements made by the State Mining Engineer with regard to both quantities and values of ore, metallurgical treatment and the profit to be made from the mine are, I submit, such as to warrant the passing of the Bill by the House. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. G. A. Kempton, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Parliamentary Allowances Amendment.
2. Public Service Commissioner's Salary.

Received from the Assembly, and read a first time.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [8.55] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to increase the number of Ministers from six to eight. As hon. members know, the number of Ministers has not been increased since

the passing of the Constitution Act of 1899. Since that time the work of administration has grown enormously, with the development of the State. The number of departments and sub-departments has multiplied; and if it was necessary to have six Ministers in 1899, it is necessary to have at least eight now. The work of the Government has been performed in the past with the assistance of Honorary Ministers. The principle of appointing Honorary Ministers can scarcely be regarded as sound, and surely the State should provide the funds necessary for the efficient discharge of Ministerial functions. In most cases the Honorary Ministers receive some remuneration from portfolioed Ministers. That is an old practice. It can be taken almost for granted that the number of those in the Public Service engaged in assisting to administer the various departments has multiplied by four or five during the past 30 years or so.

Hon. G. W. Miles: If you were to get rid of the State trading concerns, Honorary Ministers would not be necessary.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think the hon. member, who is attached to a certain party, took any very considerable action during eight or nine years in the direction of trying to abolish the State trading concerns.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The party fell down on their job.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I presume the Minister does not refer to me. I opposed the State trading concerns continuously.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It was silent opposition.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No; active opposition.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All statutory documents have to be signed by a portfolioed Minister, even though he has an Honorary Minister to help him. Any member of the House who has had experience of Ministerial office will admit that the work has got beyond the capacity of any six men. It has been only by toiling day and night and on Saturday and Sunday that Minister have been able to keep abreast of their work. That is a fact. That kind of economy is false economy. For the work Ministers have to do is so important that there should be ample time in which to consider all the problems and questions that confront us. To enable that to be done there must be a sufficient number of Ministers. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [9.2]: I cannot allow the Bill to pass in silence and without expressing my opinion. I am entirely opposed to it. I do not see any necessity for two extra Ministers. It is idle for the Chief Secretary to refer to the fact that we had six Ministers in 1899 and to suggest that if we required six then we should require eight now. The Chief Secretary overlooked the fact that in 1899 there was no Federation.

Hon. H. Stewart: There was no group settlement scheme, and that requires one Minister alone.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We had post and telegraphs, customs, army and navy, navigation and so on to attend to. Probably one reason why Ministers find difficulty in coping with the work to-day is that they desire to be not only Ministers but Under Secretaries as well. They take too much detail work upon themselves. Instead of leaving that to the officers of their departments, thus leaving themselves free to control the policy of the State, they try to do too much. Then again if there is necessity for extra Ministers it is due to the State trading concerns which must be a nightmare not only to the Minister controlling them but to every member of the Government. It must be realised that soon or later the trading concerns must go, and when that happens there will not be too much for six Ministers to cope with. My experience is that you can never get eight men to do six men's work, but we can get six men to do eight men's work properly. We can get one man to do two men's work properly for a short while, but we can never get two men to do one man's work, for one man will do what he thinks is sufficient and then the rest is never done. We could very well continue with having six portfolioed Ministers. It is late in the session to make long speeches, for they are now unnecessary and undesirable. I suppose the Bill will go through because nine out of every ten members may adopt the attitude, "If there are eight portfolios instead of six, I will have a better chance of being one of eight than I will have of being one of six."

Hon. J. Cornell: There is nothing like ambition.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: Is Mr. Holmes hoping to be one of the eight?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No; I can claim this distinction that I—

Hon. H. Stewart: Never will be.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I can claim the distinction of having refused more portfolios than any other man in Parliament, and I can prove that statement. However, if the Bill is to be agreed to, some provision should be made for two portfolioed Ministers in this House. We require two portfolioed Ministers here because if anything should happen to the Leader of the House we want a Minister who will be fully responsible, competent and fully capable to carry on the business of the House. We have had experience in the past when the present Leader of the House was ill: the business of the country was held up.

Hon. H. Stewart: There is too much work for one Minister in this House.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But not too much work in Government departments for six Ministers.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [9.7]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why?

Hon. J. Cornell: What is the good of wasting time; put the Bill through.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Very well. This Bill is one regarding which the Government do not claim to have received a mandate from the electors.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: Then it has a better chance of being passed.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not know that it has.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think the Leader of the Opposition said on the hustings that if returned he would put such a Bill through.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Leaders of Oppositions may have done so, and I believe members from time to time, having a knowledge of the work to be done by the Leader in this Chamber, have been satisfied that one Minister was not sufficient to conduct all the business of this Chamber.

Hon. J. Nicholson: He has a heavy load to carry.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Quite a number of members have no desire whatever to carry his load. Having regard to the volume of work it is necessary to have an additional Minister. However, it has been averred that one Minister intends going abroad for six months.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Oh!

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That is quite correct. I want to know if that is one of the reasons why additional Ministers are required.

Hon. H. Stewart: But Premiers have gone away for six months.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: And if the Premier can go away for six months, I suppose a Minister can go away and take a secretary with him.

Hon. J. Cornell: He will probably come back a wiser man.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Perhaps so. But is that one of the reasons why more Ministers are required? The Constitution Act says that at least one of the executive offices of the Crown shall always be held by a member of the Legislative Council. Before I vote for the Bill I want to know something about the intentions of the Government. Do they intend to appoint another member of this Chamber as a Minister? There are three Honorary Ministers associated with the present Government and I suppose it will be a matter for the Government to determine who the extra Ministers shall be.

Hon. H. Stewart: You really do not suppose that, do you?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Perhaps it may be a matter for Caucus to determine. I have no inside information, but it is generally understood that Caucus will deal with the question, and already the respective merits of the Honorary Ministers are being discussed. It is suggested that the two Honorary Ministers in the Legislative Assembly will be appointed as the two extra Ministers. Having regard to the work undertaken by the Leader of the House I want some assurance from the Chief Secretary as to what the position will be. It may influence some members regarding the vote they will record on the Bill.

Hon. A. Lovekin: You will have to wait until he gets a mandate from Caucus.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Caucus determinations are sometimes influenced by clever manipulation. As the result, some individual who thinks he will be elected, finds that he and his supporters have been outmanoeuvred. However, we have the right to ask the question regarding the intentions of the Government. There is another point: When will the Bill operate if it be passed? Will it be proclaimed forthwith, or will the proclamation be held over until after the next Legislative Council elections.

Hon. J. Cornell: If you read the Bill you will see how it will come into force.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I see nothing in the Bill to indicate when it will come into force except by way of proclamation.

Hon. J. Cornell: It will come into force as soon as it is assented to.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Then I ask the Chief Secretary whether it is the intention to proclaim the Bill immediately preceding the Legislative Council election or immediately afterwards. The Government decision in that respect will have a material bearing on one of the seats that will be contested next May. Then, again, it has been stated frequently that the Labour Party believe in holding Assembly, Council or Federal elections on the one day. Is it the intention of the Government, seeing that there will be a Council election next May and that they will have to appoint two new Ministers, perhaps two in the Assembly, or one in the Assembly and one in this Chamber, to hold the Assembly by-elections at the same time as the Council elections, and thus save expenditure.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is the point.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I believe Labour congresses have determined that such elections should be held on the one day. Here is an opportunity to give effect to that decision should the Bill be agreed to.

Hon. E. H. Gray: But the new Ministers will not be opposed.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I question that very much. If the member for Kalgoorlie (Hon. J. Cunningham) goes up for election, he may find he is very vigorously opposed.

Hon. J. Cornell: Don't give away your information or he may not stand.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Then if the member for Leederville (Hon. H. Millington) were to contest his seat, we must remember that his constituency comprised portion of the Metropolitan-Suburban Province or portion of the Metropolitan Province. We might see Dr. Saw and Mr. Macfarlane contesting their seats on the same day as the member for Leederville was contesting his seat, and thus avoid unnecessary expense. I desire the Chief Secretary to furnish information on the questions I have raised. Clause 4 of the Bill seeks to amend the Fourth Schedule of the Act. The Fourth Schedule provides for the salaries of His Excellency the Governor, a private secretary to His Excellency, the Clerk of the Execu-

tive Council, the Chief Justice and the three Puisne Judges and six Ministers. I can understand the figures given except the sum of £350 provided for the Clerk of the Executive Council. To whom is that sum paid?

Hon. J. Cornell: To no one.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If we provide under the Constitution for the payment of £350 to the clerk of the Executive Council, it must be payable to someone. If there is any work to be done and someone does the work, he can claim the money. Perhaps the Chief Secretary can give me some information about that. There is a matter regarding the issue of writs about which I am not certain, and I wish to submit the facts in order that the Chief Secretary may furnish an answer to-morrow. It is suggested that a member of this House may be elevated to the position of Minister. Under the Electoral Act it is possible for a writ to be issued for an election on the 24th January, for nominations to be receivable on the 24th February, for polling to take place on the 24th March, and for the return of the writ to be fixed for the 25th March. The earliest date for the issue of a writ for an ordinary election resulting from effluxion of time would be the 23rd March, and it would be possible, if a member of this House was elevated to the rank of Minister, for the writ to be issued on the 24th January, and for that to determine the date of the extraordinary election, as well as the election due to effluxion of time. In other words, the election of members for the ensuing six years might be determined on the 25th March, instead of, as is usual, somewhere about the 10th May. I wished to be quite certain on the point before submitting it to the Chief Secretary, but as the House was not favourable to an adjournment of the debate, I should like the Chief Secretary to say whether it would be possible to put the by-election on to a certain date so that there would be one election instead of two and whoever was made Minister would get the position by virtue of having been returned at the first election. By the answers to be given to my questions I shall be guided in my attitude to the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [9.21]: But for the remarks of Mr. Harris I should not have spoken on this Bill. I have known the hon. member for many years, but I have never known him to be so hard put to it to

find an argument. He has indulged in a veritable fishing expedition.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You have not gripped the position yet.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Boiled down, the object of the Bill is to create more Ministers, and it is suggested that one of them may be surreptitiously presented to the electors before the recognised time for holding the next Council elections. I think there are broader motives behind the Bill than that.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Massed production may decide it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Let us consider the Bill on its merits and give the Government responsible for its introduction credit for a little political honesty. The Bill, as it affects the public exchequer, will simply mean the expenditure of another £1,800 a year.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Another £2,000.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No, immediately two additional Ministers are appointed, they will each lose £100 of their allowance. They will draw £500 instead of £600 as members, plus the Ministerial allowance. As to the need for the Bill, let us consider the Departments of Lands, Migration and Agriculture administered by the Hon. M. F. Troy. I say without fear of contradiction that those departments, if administered as they should be, are sufficient to occupy the attention of three Ministers. The Department of Agriculture warrants the appointment of a full-time Minister if any department does. It is not so much the office work that the Minister is called upon to do; the State will be the gainer if Ministers have time to move about the country. The future of the North-West and the possibilities latent in that territory warrant the whole attention of a Minister. Mr. Holmes stated that when six Ministers were first appointed we had certain departments that no longer exist. If we take the broad view we must admit that the loss of those departments is more than counterbalanced by the increase of other departments. The population of the State has more than doubled and our territory is the largest of any State in the Commonwealth. The system of appointing Honorary Ministers is a very unsatisfactory one. It does not follow that the brainiest man gets the portfolio; sometimes it happens that the brainiest man is the Honorary Minister. While some Ministers may place implicit trust in the Honorary Minister working under them, others may not do so but may

veto the decisions of the Honorary Minister. We should endeavour to do away with a system that is liable to be unsatisfactory. The question whether we should have two portfolioed Ministers in this House can well be left to the Premier. He thoroughly understands and appreciates the difficulties of the Leader of the House and the tremendous amount of work he is called upon to do. If the question is left to the discretion of the Premier, as it should be, I think he will rectify the position. Reference has been made to the fact that Labour Ministers are elected by caucus. That has been a plank of the Labour Party's platform throughout the Commonwealth for the last 15 years. It is an established practice of the Labour Party to elect their Ministers, and why should we now argue about it when it has been in vogue so long. There is no obligation on the Government to appoint Honorary Ministers. There is no obligation on them to have an Honorary Minister in this Chamber to assist the Chief Secretary. The Mitchell Government did not appoint Honorary Ministers. When Sir Hal Colebatch led the Council, he had no assistance and the same applied to Mr. Ewing. If we want any assurance that the Government are likely to give the Chief Secretary assistance, we might find it in the fact that they have provided an Honorary Minister in this House.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Do not you think we should ensure that some assistance is provided?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is no business of ours.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Are not we entitled to know?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Why argue at this stage about caucus selecting Ministers? Why beat a dead horse? It has been the practice for the last 15 years and we cannot alter it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We can alter the Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: But another place may not accept it. It is no business of ours to provide definitely for a second Minister in this Chamber. If the Premier is not prepared to grant the Chief Secretary the assistance that some members consider necessary in this House, it is for the Chief Secretary to decide whether he will continue in that position.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is for the House to say.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is not, and I hope the House will not adopt that attitude. I support the second reading.

HON. W. T. GLASHEEN (South-East) [9.28]: I intend to vote for the second reading. For the life of me I cannot see how any member can reasonably oppose such a proposition. The Chief Secretary has argued that if six Ministers were necessary in 1899, more Ministers must be necessary now owing to the added work since that period, which work is still increasing. Mr. Holmes mentioned that since 1899 we have lost the Customs and Post Office Departments.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And the army and navy too.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: He was of opinion that there was now less work for Ministers to do than there was prior to Federation. I find it very difficult to follow that line of reasoning. It is not so much a question of the number of departments to be administered as to the magnitude of the work compared with what it was in 1899. At that period we were a one-horse show; we had nothing in the State worth calling an industry, excepting mining. Mr. Holmes might visualise the difference between 1899 and the present time in respect of agriculture alone. I am sure he will agree that the actual work in that department is far greater to-day than it was then. Take also the growth of the railway system. At that time we had no considerable mileage of railways and the work to be done was infinitesimal compared with the work of to-day. Compare also the duties of the Public Works Department between that time and now. It can safely be said that in many instances it is ten to twenty times, and perhaps fifty times greater than it was in 1899. In view of all these facts, I feel there is every justification for the increase in the number of salaried Ministers. As a consequence of the great development in agriculture, the need for railways all over the State, and the natural sequence in the shape of production and the construction of roads, bridges and harbours, entailing considerable work in the various departments, I am inclined to the belief that the sooner we increase the number of Ministers, the more effectively will the work be done and the more general satis-

faction will be given to the public. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. EWING (South-West) [9.33]: I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill and congratulate the Government on bringing it in. I know from experience that the work is much too great for six Ministers to perform with satisfaction to themselves and to the country. The present Government realised that fact by appointing three Honorary Ministers. The proposal, I understand, is that the majority of the Honorary Ministers will be raised to full Cabinet rank and they will then act as first-class constitutional Ministers. At the present time a number of departments are being administered by Honorary Ministers. I have always said that I have no time for a system of that kind. Every Minister who is in charge of a department should have the full responsibility of the work he undertakes. One speaker said that some constitutional Ministers are satisfied to leave the Honorary Ministers to do the work, and that then they endorse all that those Honorary Ministers have done. That position is not reasonable. If a Minister is administering a department wherein may be involved the expenditure of money, a department, too, that demands close observation, he must take the responsibility of everything that occurs there. I feel that the Premier has quite enough on his hands by attending to the affairs of the Treasury, but he has other portfolios as well. The fact is also apparent to-day, as has been mentioned, that the Minister for Lands has a great deal too much to do. His time would be sufficiently taken up if he had control of group settlements and nothing else. There should be quite enough work there to demand the attention of one Minister. The question of appointing another Minister in this House will, of course, rest with the Government. If the Leader of this Chamber is overworked, I am sure attention will be given to the matter by the Premier. The position in which the Chief Secretary finds himself has at all times been recognised, and rightly so too. Members of this House show him consideration in every possible way. We may well leave it to the Premier to say how this House is to be constituted so far as the representation of the Government is concerned. We should be above all party considerations in this matter. Mr. Harris inferred that something im-

proper was going to be done in connection with the appointment of additional Ministers. Personally, I do not consider the question of caucus, or the manner in which Ministers are elected is any affair of mine. The point is whether we require eight or nine responsible Ministers instead of six. For my part I would be prepared to make them all constitutional Ministers, if it was necessary to appoint that number. The House will be well advised, remembering the progress that is being made by the State, to agree to the Bill. I understand that the Honorary Ministers receive a certain remuneration at the hands of responsible Ministers. That may be all right, if Ministers choose to follow that course, but a Minister who gives his full time to the administration of a department should be paid as a constitutional Minister, and a constitutional Minister should not be called upon to contribute, out of his own salary, towards the payment of the Honorary Ministers. I do not believe in that kind of thing, and I would not be a party to it. I congratulate the Government on having introduced the Bill and I cannot believe that any member will vote against it. If he does, he will be voting against the administration being carried on satisfactorily, and also voting against the best interests of the State.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [9.38]: This Bill is rather more important than hon. members may believe. It has been overlooked that there is embodied in the Bill a proposal to bring up to date our Constitution Act so far as certain charges on our Consolidated Revenue are concerned. The Bill proposes not only to increase the number of Ministers, but in Clause 4 provision is made for an alteration in the amount covered by the fourth schedule. In that schedule it will be noted that there is provision for a charge on Consolidated Revenue on the amounts set out. It will be remembered in the early part of the session we passed a Bill to increase the salaries of judges by a certain amount. There was an increase given a good many years prior to that, but apparently there has never been an amendment to the schedule. The Bill before us, besides proposing to increase the number of Ministers, will also effect some desirable changes in bringing up to date the schedule of the Constitution Act. Unless the Con-

stitution Act is amended, the question will arise that there can be no appointment of Ministers who will be paid out of Consolidated Revenue. We know what means are adopted at present to overcome the difficulty with the Honorary Minister. I appreciate what Mr. Holmes stated when he offered a comparison between 1899 and the present time. When he reviews the position, the increase in population, the increase in land settlement and development generally, he will recognise that the responsibilities and cares and worries of Ministers have increased enormously.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: Our relations with the Commonwealth create a good deal of work for the Government.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is so. The various departments have all expanded. We may take as a very simple example one of the duties that fall to the lot of Ministers. That is travelling about from one centre to another. It is very necessary that Ministers should visit every centre. Districts have opened up that were not in existence in 1899, nor even many years later. Members who represent some of our larger provinces know what a task it is to visit every locality within the province. Clearly there is justification for an increase in the number of Ministers so that their work may be more thoroughly done than is possible at present. It must be very unsatisfactory for Ministers to have to act in their departments more or less as rubber stamps. Our Honorary Ministers are seeking to discharge their duties in a satisfactory manner, but in order that certain statutory duties might be performed it is necessary for the Minister of full ministerial rank to affix his signature to certain documents, which may not be signed by any Honorary Minister. I congratulate rather than condemn Mr. Harris for having called attention to certain clauses. It is here provided that the Bill shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation.

Hon. J. Cornell: My criticism of Mr. Harris was that he had hinted at ulterior motives.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am not suggesting ulterior motives, nor do I think there are any.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The sooner they get the money the better.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They will get it next week. You can make up your mind to that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I see no necessity for departing from the usual custom. Why should the Bill have to await proclamation? Once it is assented to it should take effect. It is not necessary to make the appointment of Ministers forthwith if the Government decide that the Honorary Ministers should not be elevated to full ministerial rank until later. However, the Bill need not be deferred to a date to be fixed by proclamation. I think those words might well be struck out. Let the Bill take effect from the date of assent.

Hon. A. Lovekin: If they want to keep it back they will hold up the Royal assent.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If they were to do that they would fall in the estimation of many hon. members here, including the Chief Secretary himself. Reference has been made to Subsection 3 of Section 43 of the principal Act. That subsection provides that one at least of the executive offices shall always be held by a member of the Council. We all know the hard task that falls to the lot of the Leader of this House, and I suggest that the Bill should make provision for two Ministers of full ministerial rank in this House. Then in the event of illness overtaking one of them there will always be another to rely upon. It would be of great help to the House. When in Committee I will move that such an amendment be inserted.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What would happen if the party in power had only one representative in this House?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That day is very far off. Even if it should arrive there will always be a sufficient number of members possessed of independence of thought and action who would gladly go to the rescue. I will support the second reading.

HON. H. A. STEPHENSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.54]: I will support the Bill. I think we should have more Ministers than we have at present. No member of the House could seriously compare the work of 1899 with that of the present day. Business has increased tenfold since then and is still increasing. Of the present Ministers not one could be called lazy. They all work hard, even on Saturdays and Sundays. They travel about a great deal, are very energetic, and they endeavour to carry out the duties imposed upon them. It has been said that if we were to dispose of the trading concerns

there would not be so much work for Ministers. But I have come to the conclusion that there is very little possibility of our doing away with the trading concerns. Our trouble is to see that there are not any more brought into existence. Some years ago we had in power a Government nearly every member of which was pledged to do away with trading concerns. A member of this House made an effort to achieve something in that direction. He got a Bill through this House, but when it went to another place a number of members who from time to time had declared their opposition to State trading suddenly discovered that they were wanted elsewhere and when the division was taken they were missing. In my opinion the same thing would occur again. So, as I say, we have not much chance of getting rid of the existing trading concerns. We should if possible have an extra Minister in this House. The work, especially towards the end of the session, imposes a very great strain on the Chief Secretary. I hope the Bill will pass and that the Premier will see to it that the Chief Secretary gets the support he deserves.

HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHELAN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.57]: If we place Ministers in responsible positions we should pay them a salary commensurate with those positions. Ministers are agreed that the work is altogether too great for them to carry out. In order to relieve themselves of some of the pressure they have appointed Honorary Ministers, and it is necessary for the original Ministers to give of their own emoluments for the work undertaken by those Honorary Ministers. That is not a position in which a member of the Government should be placed. Ministers of the Crown should be paid in accordance with the dignity of their positions. I will support the second reading.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan) [9.58]: I concur with the view expressed by those members who recommend an increase in the number of Ministers. I realise what advances the State has made in railways, in public works, in land settlement, in afforestation, and now in the development of agriculture on the dairying side. To those matters alone a

Minister could well devote his time, so as to make up the leeway with regard to what we send out of the country to secure the foodstuffs which should be produced within the country. I am in sympathy with the suggestion that this House should receive recognition by the appointment of a second permanent Minister. I have now had six years' Parliamentary experience under three Governments. I have always recognised that the Leader of the House has an overdose of work. If in an ordinary business the man at the head has too much to do, the business fails because it is understaffed. The business of the country is only an enlarged form of a private concern. If Ministers cannot give their departments full attention, the country is not receiving its fair due. If there are not enough Ministers to do the work, it is only reasonable to increase the number. Should it be necessary at any future date to decrease the number of those holding Cabinet rank, Parliament can do this. I look upon the Bill as a commonsense proposition. It will mean doing away with Honorary Ministers, who undoubtedly did take toll from the pay received by Ministers holding full Cabinet rank.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill does not say it is intended to do away with Honorary Ministers.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am prepared to accept the suggestion that it does mean that. I hope the Bill will be passed.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [10.3]: Ministers of the Crown should be paid a decent salary, but I think if the Government got rid of the trading concerns there would be no necessity to appoint two more Ministers.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It does not take two Ministers to look after the trading concerns.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I think it does. I disagree with the views expressed by Mr. Stephenson when he said that the State trading concerns will never be got rid of. We did have a weak-kneed Government in the last Parliament but one. They were returned pledged to abolish State trading concerns, but they went back on their word.

Hon. J. Ewing: They did not.

Hon. G. W. MILES: They did. It is a standing disgrace that this country should have returned a Government which failed to carry out their pledges. I hope some day

we shall have a Government that will get rid of these concerns. There will then be no necessity for two additional Ministers. As a protest against the existence of these trading concerns, I intend to vote against the Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member dies hard.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [10.4]: I am pleased at the reception accorded to this Bill, and am not in any way surprised. It had its origin in the Council. As with some other Bills, it is due to speeches made in this Chamber, in the course of which further Ministerial assistance was urged. It is deemed by other members of the Government that the suggestion is a sound one.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That has often been said.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Does that mean we shall have two Ministers here?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: That will be a matter for the Government to determine. Do they mean to appoint any member of this House as one of the additional Ministers? There is an old proverb which says "First catch your hare, and then proceed to cook it."

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Our hare is the second Minister.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: That aspect of the question has not been considered by the Government.

Hon. A. Lovekin: I thought we had killed our hare.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: This will be settled by proclamation. Hon. members know as much about that aspect of the question as I do. No decision has been arrived at in the matter. The provision for a proclamation has been inserted in many Bills. I understand that Mr. Harris drew attention to Schedule 4. That appears in the original Act.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I want to know who receives the £350.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: The clerk of the Executive Council. That provision is in the Act of 1899.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Who receives the money?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know. Whoever is the clerk of Executive Council is entitled to receive it, but I do not think he is receiving all of it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I think only a small portion of it.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is there any suggestion about increasing the salary of the Clerks of this House?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The Governor's salary remains the same, as well as that of his Private Secretary and that of the Clerk of Executive Council. The Chief Justice appears in the old Act as receiving £1,700. I understand there have been two increases. The salary was £1,400 in the principal Act, and it appears in the Bill as £2,300.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short Title:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That the words "and shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation" be struck out.

The appointments should take effect when the Bill is assented to. There is too much uncertainty about a proclamation.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest that the words should be left in. Is it suggested that the Government would desire to accomplish some sinister object? It would be quite easy for them to hold back the assent in order to accomplish some wicked end, if they so desired.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I do not suggest they have any wicked ends.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 2 and 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of Fourth Schedule:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There seems to be a misunderstanding as to the salary Ministers will receive. I think the Premier will receive £1,200 a year and each Minister £1,000 a year, in addition to their Parliamentary allowances. This will give the Premier £1,700 per annum and the seven Ministers £1,600. Is that correct?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Ministers will receive a total sum of £1,500 a year in-

cluding their Parliamentary allowance. I think the Premier will receive £1,700.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I should like to clear up the point regarding the £350 to the Clerk of Executive Council. The Constitution provides that this money shall be paid. I understand it has to be paid into some person's account. Is it drawn and paid back into revenue? Can any person holding that position claim the money at some subsequent date?

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member will connect his remarks with the Bill, which does not refer to the subject he is discussing.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Fourth Schedule to the principal Act is proposed to be amended by certain substitutions, and the third item of that Fourth Schedule is the Clerk of the Executive Council. Perhaps the amount may have to be deleted from the schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: The Bill does not purport to touch either the Governor or the Executive Council.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: But as we are amending the schedule, we have the right to deal with anything contained in it.

The CHAIRMAN: I have a doubt as to that.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I have no doubt whatever. Is any person entitled to this sum of money provided in the Constitution?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Certainly anyone filling the position could demand the salary unless there was an arrangement to the contrary. At present the Secretary to the Premier fills the position, but that arrangement may be only temporary.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Does he act without pay?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what he receives. There is provision for payment of £350 annually to the Clerk of the Executive Council. To-day the position is filled by the Secretary to the Premier, but to-morrow it may be vacant and the next appointee might have to be paid. Therefore, the salary should remain.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Undoubtedly we are entitled to discuss the whole of the schedule. There is more in the point raised by Mr Harris than appears on the surface. It has been suggested that the Secretary to the Premier performs the work of Clerk of the Executive Council in an honorary capacity.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: He gets £100 a year for it.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The Estimates provide only £5 for the Executive Council, and that is under the head "Incidentals." As regards the Secretary to the Premier, there is nothing on the Estimates to show that he receives anything as Clerk to the Executive Council. However, that may not be necessary as regards the Estimates, the salary being provided under the Constitution Act. The officer in question may draw £960 as Secretary to the Premier, and £350 as Clerk to the Executive Council. That would not seem right. We should have some clear explanation as to whether both amounts are drawn by the same officer.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not said that the £350 is drawn. I do not know the terms under which the present Clerk to the Executive Council has been appointed; the appointment was made by the previous Government. However, the £350 must be retained in the Constitution in case of a vacancy occurring.

Hon. A. Lovekin: But he is entitled to draw it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Unless a special arrangement has been made with him.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: There is £350 provided under the Constitution to be paid to some person as Clerk of the Executive Council; and if some person is filling that position he can sooner or later claim the £350 yearly, even if at present he is only receiving 5s. of it, or nothing of it. I have in mind a member of another Parliament who put himself on a high pedestal as refusing to accept an increase. He shrewdly left the instalments of the increase to accumulate in the Treasury until he retired from Parliament, and then he collected the total, intimating that he would give it to charity. Someone can claim this £350, since it is in the Constitution Act.

The CHAIRMAN: I have not desire to make discussion. Members of the Committee are well within their rights in discussing the schedule as a whole, but I consider that the Clerk of the Executive Council is not a subject matter of the Bill, and that therefore the Chief Secretary might be asked in the regular way to give information.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Unfortunately the Chief Secretary is not at present in a position to give the information. I suggest that we finalise the Bill to-morrow instead of to-day, meantime reporting progress.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: If we do report progress, Mr. Chairman, I suggest you consider meantime whether on a Bill amending the Constitution of a Bill to provide annual supplies members are not entitled to traverse the whole question, from Dan to Beersheba. If to-morrow, Mr. Chairman, you rule—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member please resume his seat. I stated from the Chair that members are quite in the right in discussing the whole schedule or any part of it; but I also said that the matter of the Clerk of the Executive Council was not in the Bill. With fairness to the Chief Secretary, all necessary information could be obtained by asking a question to-morrow.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: That is quite right, but the whole includes the part. The member of another Parliament referred to by Mr. Harris was asked about the money by a Taxation Commissioner. The member replied that he had not received it. The Taxation Commissioner, however, taxed him on it, upon the ground that he had earned the money. Thereupon the member took the money, and quite rightly.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Section 45 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act shows that what has been suggested by the Chief Secretary is so far in order, but of course the hon. gentleman has not supplied the information desired. The point has been raised that any person holding the position is entitled to claim the salary provided. I suggest that no person is entitled to make the claim; no person is entitled to claim any more than the amount at which he has been engaged to discharge services or duties. The Committee are quite entitled to ask for the information. The point has been raised that any occupant of the office is entitled to claim the full amount set down for it in the Constitution.

Hon. E. H. Harris: If he is appointed to that position, he can.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: But he has been appointed at a lower salary than that mentioned in the principal Act. If the Government made arrangements to pay £100 or £5, he could not claim more than that sum.

Member: Has that been going on since 1909 without attention being drawn to it?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is no necessity to rush this matter through. I will report progress and supply the information at the next sitting.

Progress reported.

BILL—HOSPITALS.*Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council to the Bill.

BILL—LEIGHTON-ROBB'S JETTY RAILWAY.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. BURVILL (South-East) [10.32]: I do not think it is fair that such an important Bill should be brought down in the last few days of the session. Had it been brought down earlier, members would have had more time to consider it. The Minister admitted that it was of a far-reaching nature and that the Bill would give the Government authority to commence the scheme of harbour improvements prepared by the Engineer-in-Chief. The Minister also said that the scheme was clearly set forth and justified in a comprehensive report submitted to Parliament a few weeks ago. He also added that laymen could not grasp the technical side of the scheme. That is an important point emphasising that the Bill should not have been left to such a late hour of the session. We, as laymen, are called upon to agree to the Bill or to shelve it for the time being. The Minister told us it was necessary to pass the Bill so that the Government could resume land that was necessary in connection with the railway and the bridge that is to be constructed. He suggested that any delay would mean that the Government would have to pay more for the land than was necessary. There seem to be two reasons why the Bill has been brought forward now. One is that the land required shall be resumed forthwith and the other, which is more important, is that the Government apparently desire to proceed with Mr. Stileman's scheme and commit the State to an expenditure of at least £3,200,000 for a start. If that is done, it seems to me that the opening up of the Esperance harbour may be prevented.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: And Mr. Gray knows.

Hon. A. BURVILL: During the last years £10,000 has been spent on the Esperance harbour and I see that £200 is to be spent there next year. If we are committed to a huge expenditure on the harbour at Fremantle, the loop line required at Albany to relieve the pressure on the Fremantle harbour will not be built. It will mean that the further improvements of the Bunbury Harbour will not be proceeded with.

Hon. J. Ewing: If that is so, you must oppose the Bill.

Hon. A. BURVILL: The Geraldton harbour seems to be provided for all right. So much money has been spent there that it will be necessary to complete the work. The outer harbours have not adequate transport facilities. Some are not properly constructed, and, except at Albany, the depth of water is not sufficient for overboard boats. During the last 30 years practically the whole of the money available has been spent in the development of Fremantle harbour.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did they not dredge the Albany harbour two feet deeper than the entrance?

Hon. A. BURVILL: I am not discussing that point, nor am I discussing a certain dock at Fremantle that cost £250,000. Some time ago attention was drawn to the necessity for railways from Kalbarin, La Grange and Newdegate. The Railway Advisory Board furnished a recommendation regarding the Kalbarin line, but it has not been constructed. We were promised a railway Bill this session, but the question of routes entered into it and it was suggested that a comprehensive scheme of railway construction should be prepared for the Government by the Railway Advisory Board. The idea was that each agricultural area should have access to its nearest port. That would mean that agriculturists would have to pay the lowest possible freight to get their produce to port. No such scheme has ever been submitted to Parliament through the Railway Advisory Board. On the other hand—I do not know which Minister, or any, instigated it—we have had a scheme drawn up by the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Stileman, the object of which was to provide for 96 per cent. of the imports to the State and 76.89 per cent. of the exports from the State.

Hon. J. Ewing: All to go through Fremantle?

Hon. A. BURVILL: Apparently. If that is to be done, it will effectively block the construction of the Kalgarin railway. A Bill could have been passed for that purpose and it would not have meant the expenditure involved in the partienar scheme now under consideration. The Minister said that Fremantle was the nearest port for 42 per cent. of the agricultural produce of the State and that only 10 per cent. of the cultivable land within the Fremantle zone had been developed. It will be seen that the railway construction within the ambit of Fremantle is more extensive than elsewhere. At Geraldton, Esperance and Albany the position is far worse, although it is not so bad in connection with Bunbury. The Minister's statement was misleading. I asked for a map to be laid on the Table showing the total area within the ambit of specified ports, namely, Albany, Bunbury, and Fremantle. I did not ask for particulars regarding Esperance or Geraldton, but if the particulars I sought had been made available, they would have shown the position was not as stated by the Chief Secretary. The total area within the Fremantle zone, from a geographical standpoint, is 23,256,000 acres. According to the Stileman scheme that would reach to Salmon Gums and take the traffic from Esperance until the harbour there was ready to cope with it. The wheat area is 18,960,000 acres. In the Albany zone it is 12,256,000 acres with a wheat area of 6,760,000 acres. In the Bunbury zone it is 9,096,000 acres with a wheat area of 2,000,000 acres. The State of Western Australia has an area of 975,920 square miles and the area in the geographical zone of Fremantle is only 44,150 square miles. That leaves 931,770 square miles for the rest of the State. I cannot for the life of me see how it can be true that Fremantle is the nearest port for 42 per cent. of the agricultural products when Fremantle has only one twenty-second part of the total area of the State within its ambit.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: He does not suggest that the whole State is capable of agricultural production.

Hon. A. BURVILL: No, but a great part of the State can produce agricultural products of various kinds. Earlier in the evening we discussed a Bill to provide for the conveyance of mining products from Wiluna to Geraldton. There is another

railway running into Meekatharra to convey manganese ore to its natural port of Geraldton. I am of opinion that in the Engineer-in-Chief's scheme too much has been made of the wheat area. According to railway statistics, the most bulky product carried in the Bunbury zone and the product that brings most revenue to the Railway Department is timber, and the greatest portion of it goes from Bunbury. In considering the ports, the question of their enlargement, and the development of the hinterland that geographically belongs to those ports, we should consider not wheat alone but timber, potatoes, butter, mining products and all the rest. This Bill, I take it, will mean that the State will be committed to the expenditure of an enormous sum of money. It will be the initiation of what may prove to be the greatest scheme of centralisation ever proposed in the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. Lovekin: With three millions for Fremantle, you will get none for Albany.

Hon. A. BURVILL: I do not want the hon. member to think I am parochial, but it seems rather a parochial view to suggest that practically 90 per cent. of the imports and exports of one-third of this continent should pass through one port.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We shall be able to shut up the other ports then.

Hon. A. BURVILL: The point I wish to stress is that the borrowing capacity of Western Australia has a limit, and if it is intended to pledge the country to the expenditure of the vast sum of money involved in this scheme, there will not be sufficient funds available to develop the hinterland from Southern Cross to Albany so that each port will get its natural trade.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Is not the port of Fremantle sufficient for the State?

Hon. A. BURVILL: I should like to point out that during the last 30 years all the harbours save that at Fremantle have been at a standstill. Two years ago I asked a question about the number of railways constructed and authorised since 1896. The answer I received was that during the 30 years 59 railways had been authorised totalling 2,679 miles at a cost of about £8,500,000. Within the ambit of the port of Albany—and that is not the worst example—151 miles were constructed at a cost of £321,000. Within the ambit of

Esperance the mileage was considerably less, though since 1925 that position has been remedied to a slight extent. During the 30 years £2,471,000 was spent on the Fremantle harbour.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It has been starved all the time.

Hon. A. BURVILL: The expenditure on the Geraldton harbour was £77,000, Bunbury £510,000, Albany £163,000 and Esperance £10,000. More money was actually spent in trying to make a dock at Fremantle than was spent on harbour works at Geraldton and Albany. Recently there has been an expansion of railway policy. The railways have not been constructed, but it has been necessary under the migration scheme to authorise certain lines. Railways have been authorised that will connect the ports of Bunbury and Albany with the group settlements; the railway has been carried to Newdegate and the Pingrup-Nyabing line has been extended. But there is a crying need, especially in the wheat belt, for the construction of more railways. I have heard the Minister for Lands say that if he had the land he could almost immediately put his hand on 1,000 settlers willing to take up blocks in our wheat belt. There is not the slightest doubt that he could and I believe the number could be increased considerably. What is wanted more than anything else is a comprehensive scheme of railways to open up our wheat land, but what hope is there of doing that if we are going to carry out large schemes like the one suggested by Mr. Stileman? Perhaps it will be necessary sooner or later, but we cannot afford to spend the whole of our money on Fremantle and leave nothing to open up the hinterland that is awaiting development. The Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, stated that the measure should be passed so that the land required could be resumed, especially that required for the construction of the new bridge. According to the reports made available, the existing bridge will soon have to be replaced. The Minister admitted that the foundations for the bridge had to be thoroughly tested and an expenditure of £2,000 would be necessary for the purpose. No expenditure apart from the resumption of land, he told us, could be undertaken without first consulting Parliament. If the Bill is passed, will the Minister agree to the insertion of a clause embodying the effect

of his statement, that apart from the resumption of land no expenditure would be undertaken without first consulting Parliament. When Mr. Miles was speaking last night he quoted the report of Mr. Stileman and the reports of other experts and there seemed to be a great divergence of opinion on the question where the bridge should be built. It was admitted that no test had been made to ascertain whether suitable foundations could be secured. A question was asked "If you cannot build the bridge on the site proposed, where will it be built?" and we were told it would probably have to be located a mile or two further up-stream. The question that now arises is, if the land is resumed and it becomes necessary to build the bridge, not on the proposed site but further up the stream, what will be the use of the resumed land? It seems to me that the Bill is premature. It should not have been presented to Parliament until the experts were sure that the bridge could be constructed on the proposed site, so that when land was resumed, it could be resumed in the right place. It may be said that the harbour works will not affect the Bill to any great extent, but they may affect it. According to Mr. Stileman, the harbour works should be constructed in a certain way. Apart from his report we have the opinion of the pilots and the Chief Harbour Master contained in the correspondence of the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners and there is a tremendous divergence of opinion. Members can read the correspondence for themselves. Seeing that such a divergence of opinion exists among the harbour authorities, it seems to me that the report of the Engineer-in-Chief should receive further consideration. No doubt Mr. Stileman is better qualified to speak on the purely engineering problem than are the pilots and the Chief Harbour Master, but when a harbour is being built the shipmasters and pilots know what is required and their views on certain points should receive greater consideration than has been given them by the Engineer-in-Chief. A number of questions have arisen including the width of the bridge as well as the width of the harbour. In the Engineer-in-Chief I have no doubt we have a capable man, but I for one am not in favour of putting him on a pedestal. It would be far better if the experts were asked to meet financial men at a round table conference. In that way perhaps the conflicting opinions

existing at the present time might be reconciled.

Hon. G. Potter: I think the Engineer-in-Chief has considered the financial aspect.

Hon. A. BURVILL: The Bill could well be deferred until next session. I would like to know from the Chief Secretary whether he would agree to a clause being inserted to prevent anything being done beyond the resumption of the land. In any case, the conflicting statements that have been made should be cleared up so that the laymen in Parliament might know exactly where they are. I cannot say at this stage whether I shall or shall not support the Bill. There is a good deal involved in it, and the House should consider the measure seriously.

On motion by Hon. H. A. Stephenson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 7th December, 1927.

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

QUESTION—VERMIN ACT, KANGAROOS.

Mr. LAMOND asked Hon. H. Millington (Honorary Minister): 1. Is he aware (a) that in certain districts plain kangaroos have been declared vermin and bonuses are being

paid for their destruction; (b) that in the same districts royalty is collected on kangaroo skins? 2. In view of this will he favourably consider the removal of this anomaly and provide greater inducement to kangaroo shooters by abolishing the royalty collected by the Government on kangaroo skins in districts where such animals have been declared vermin?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON replied: 1, (a) In only one district, namely West Kimberly, have kangaroos been declared vermin; (b) the majority of kangaroos in this district are the species *M. Agilis* (coast wallaby), or *M. Robusta* (euro), and royalty is not collected on the skins. 2, The royalty on the species *M. Rufus* (red kangaroo) is twopence per skin, and as the skins are worth at least 3s. per lb., it is not considered that this small amount will prove a deterrent to hunters.

QUESTION—HOSPITALS, GROCERY SUPPLIES.

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Health: 1 How are groceries supplied to hospitals at Broome, Derby, and Wyndham? 2, If by contract, when were the last tenders called? 3, How were tenders advertised?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied:—1, At Broome and Derby groceries are purchased locally. For Wyndham Hospital, groceries are purchased by the Government Stores Department and forwarded. 2, At Broome, quotations from various traders are obtained every month. At Derby, only one firm will tender; the other declines to do so. Goods are purchased, as necessary, at best prices offering. 3, forms of quotations are issued.

QUESTION—ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

Cost of Canning Road.

Hon. G. TAYLOR asked the Minister for Works: What is the amount of money spent on the Canning-Fremantle Road, from the 1st January to the 31st October, 1927, under the Federal Aid Roads Act?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister), for the Minister for Works replied: The construction of the Canning-Fremantle road was commenced in June last, and up to the 31st October, 1927, an amount of £38,944 5s. 7d. had been expended thereon. The work is not charge-