

ment originally intended by the Minister, and graded the local authorities into three sections, one paying 22½ per cent. of their traffic fees, another paying 15 per cent., and another paying 10 per cent. Nevertheless, if we accept this system we will find it is the thin edge of the wedge, and ultimately some Government may say, "As Parliament has accepted the principle, we now find that we require more than 22½ per cent., or 15 per cent. or 10 per cent. from the local authorities, and will require as high as 50 per cent. of their traffic fees."

Hon. C. B. Williams: What do the local bodies get in the other States?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not know. I am concerned only with our own State.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You would be surprised to know what the amount was.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am also concerned in the heavy cost of the administration of the Main Roads Board. That should be kept quite distinct from the levies and the work of the local road boards. I am convinced that the difficulty can be overcome, and the bogey put up by the Commonwealth Government with regard to the petrol tax, can be disposed of. The matter could be treated in the same way as spirituous liquors are treated. The Federal Government have full control of excise and we cannot touch it, but we can license the houses that sell spirituous liquor. In precisely the same way we could license those places which sell petrol. In that way the revenue required could be raised directly from those who use this class of fuel. The owners of motor vehicles are the people who benefit by the services rendered by the Main Roads Board, not the owners of horse-drawn vehicles which are practically driven off the road by the motor traffic. The present expensive system was inaugurated particularly in the interests of motor vehicles, and it is from the users of these vehicles that the fund should be collected. This Bill aims at extracting from the local bodies revenues which already are altogether insufficient for their needs. Their past performances show that they were well able judiciously and capably to handle their own funds. They are doing a wonderful service everywhere, and their funds should be kept sacrosanct for their own use in their own district. I regret that a measure should

be brought down to extract from them so great a proportion of their fees.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 17th October, 1929.

	PAGE
Auditor General's report	1031
Questions: Pink tulip	1031
Lunacy, escape of patients	1032
Leave of absence	1032
Bills: Land Tax and Income Tax, 1A.	1032
Treasury Bills Act Amendment, 1A.	1032
Wheat Bags Act Amendment, 1A.	1032
High School Act Amendment, 3A.	1032
Reserves, 3A.	1033
Pearling Act Amendment, 3A., passed	1032
Dried Fruits Act Continuance, 2A., Com. report	1032
Water Boards Act Amendment, Council's Message	1042
Annual Estimates, Votes and Items discussed	1043
Public Works Department	1042

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor-General, in pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, the 39th Report, for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1929, which I now lay on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—PINK TULIP.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has the plant popularly known as pink tulip, and stated to be a deadly poison, been declared a noxious weed? 2, What steps, if any, are being taken to eradicate this weed, and is there any reasonable hope of complete success?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Cape tulip is not a noxious weed under the Noxious Weeds Act throughout the State but has been so declared in the Gingin, Gosnells, Fremantle, and Canning districts. 2, Under the Noxious Weeds Act it is the responsibility of the

boards to eradicate any weeds declared noxious in their districts. It is believed that, provided the necessary work is undertaken, this weed can be eradicated.

QUESTION—LUNACY, ESCAPE OF PATIENTS.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH asked the Premier: In view of the frequent escapes of patients from the Claremont Asylum, has he caused investigation to be made regarding the control of that institution? If not, does he intend taking steps in that direction?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (for the Premier), replied: 1 and 2, Yes; investigations have been made and are still in progress.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr Wilson, leave of absence, for two weeks granted to Hon. W. D. Johnson (Guildford) on the ground of ill health.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Land Tax and Income Tax.

2, Treasury Bills.

Introduced by the Minister for Railways (for the Treasurer).

3, Wheat Bags Act Amendment.

Introduced by Hon. Sir James Mitchell.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, High School Act Amendment.

2, Reserves.

Transmitted to the Council.

3, Pearling Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILL—DRIED FRUITS ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. H. Millington—Leederville) [4.45] in moving the second reading said: The Dried Fruits Act was introduced at the end of 1926 at the urgent and repeated request of the growers, owing to the par-

lous condition of the industry. Under Section 35 of the original Act it was provided that it should remain in operation until the 31st day of March, 1930. This provision was made in order to ascertain whether the control of the industry was in the interests of the growers. There is no doubt this control has had a beneficial effect, as the total values of crops have been more evenly distributed throughout the entire number of producers, and it prevents the chaotic condition that existed under which a few growers did exceptionally well and the great majority were unable to secure reasonable returns for their products. Under present conditions every grower gets practically the same price per ton for his fruit, and as he exports a fixed percentage of his tonnage, shares equally in the loss occasioned by lesser returns for the fruit exported. Some growers were opposed to the measure when it was first introduced, but they now agree that it is extremely beneficial. As proof of this it may be stated that at each of the meetings of growers held in the principal vine-growing centres, resolutions were unanimously carried in favour of the re-enactment of the Act. In addition the Dried Fruits Board have received from growers living in other centres letters expressing their appreciation of the benefits of control of the industry. It can safely be said that at least seven-eighths of those most directly concerned, namely, vine dried fruit producers, are desirous of the control being continued. The Bill extends the Act for one year from 1930 to 1931, when it will expire on the 31st March. Similar Acts to ours are in force in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. If this Bill be not passed there is grave danger that our State will be swamped with the surplus grown in the other States. This will be realised when I say that at least 15 per cent. of the total dried fruit output of Australia has to be exported overseas, only 25 per cent. being consumed in Australia. I do not propose to deal with the Act itself, which was amended last year and brought up to date so that it should conform with the Federal law, which co-operates with the Acts of the several States in respect of control of the industry. However, I propose to give a few figures showing the production, consumption and export quantities, and also the values. These figures emphasise the

necessity for control in order that the product may be marketed effectively rather than in the old chaotic way that existed prior to the passing of the original Act. Here are the figures relating to production and consumption—

Production of Dried Fruits in Western Australia during the years 1927, 1928, 1929. (In tons.)

	Currants.	Lexias.	Sultanas.	Total.
1927 ..	1,140	340	117	1,597
1928 ..	1,231	441	179	1,851
1929 ..	1,312	361	180	1,853

The figures show a gradual increase in currants, which is the principal crop, and in the total.

Consumption in Western Australia during 1927, 1928, 1929.

	Currants.	Lexias.	Sultanas.	Total.
	tons	tons	tons	tons
1927 ..	336	167	316	819
1928 ..	371	140	331	842
1929 ..	385	155	340	880

The foregoing figures show a gradual increase of consumption, both in currants and sultanas, and also in the full totals. As production of sultanas is less than consumption, the following amounts had to be imported from the Eastern States:—In 1927, 199 tons; in 1928, 152 tons; in 1929, 160 tons.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This Act need not apply to sultanas.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We had considerable argument over that on a former occasion. It was proposed that we should export a quota of our strictly limited production. However, we are not raising that point now. The position is that not only can we consume our own sultanas, but also we provide a market for the Eastern States.

Hon. G. Taylor: We are always favouring them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think the election figures are interesting some members more than these relating to dried fruit.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But these figures are of considerable interest. We cannot just now talk of millions of bushels of wheat and millions of lbs. of wool, but to the dried fruit people these figures are very interesting indeed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I agree, but other people find the election figures more interesting than yours.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Here are the figures relating to export,

total value of crops, and the accepted normal Commonwealth consumption—

Export Overseas (London).

	Currants.	Lexias.	Sultanas.	Total.
	tons	tons	tons	tons
1927 ..	804	173	nil	977
1928 ..	860	301	nil	1,161
1929 ..	927	206	nil	1,133

Total value of crops of dried fruits produced in Western Australia, during years 1927, 1928, 1929, including both State and export sales:—

1927 ..	£97,278
1928 ..	£110,198
1929 (estimated) ..	£110,298

Accepted Normal Commonwealth Consumption per annum.

Currants.	Lexias.	Sultanas.	Total.
tons	tons	tons	tons
3,600	2,500	6,600	12,700

So despite the great difficulty that was experienced in establishing the industry and the difficulties under which the growers are producing, the fact remains that it is an industry in all respects worthy of being fostered. Those engaged in it have had a particularly hard time, and but for the control a few would have been doing exceptionally well while the rest would have been starved out. The production in the Commonwealth in 1929 was, currants 14,285 tons, lexias 7,560 tons, sultanas 42,117 tons, or a total of 63,962 tons. Of that only 12,700 tons were consumed in Australia. The percentages to be exported in 1929 are as follows:—currants 74 per cent., lexias 67 per cent., sultanas 87 per cent. In view of that, we can realise the urgent need for control. This is one of the industries where control is justified, and which without control could not be carried on.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Minister would justify control of anything.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, I am not keen on that. Even now I am in difficulties with some producers because I have refused to introduce a control measure for them. My view is that there must be exceptional circumstances before we interfere with the course of a business or an industry. When on a previous occasion we were discussing the amendments to the Act, complaint was made from the Katanning district that they were not allowed to process their fruit locally.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: From Northam too.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and I think from Toodyay also. I have kept my promise as far as I can, and the board have now agreed to permit the Katanning growers to process their fruit locally.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And not the Northam growers?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Katanning makes an exceptionally good example, since to send their fruit to Perth means very lengthy and expensive transport each way. After considerable negotiations, an agreement has been reached respecting the Katanning growers. I think the board are in a reasonable frame of mind and that some arrangements might be made with them suitable to the Northam and Toodyay districts. The difficulties in those districts are not so great as those in the Katanning district, because Northam and Toodyay fruit has to travel only a relatively short distance to be processed. However, the board are anxious to meet the growers to the fullest possible extent. Unfortunately, they are subject to Federal regulations regarding the processing.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is hard to have two or three Governments kicking one all the time.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think if the member for Northam will get into touch with the board he will find they are very reasonable and that satisfactory arrangements respecting the Northam fruit can be made.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I have been in touch with them many times. We had better hold up the Bill as a protest.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I also have been in touch with them, but I do not think we had better take the risk of postponing the Bill and so jeopardising the industry. Since that occasion on which we had the argument about the processing, I have not heard any complaints from the Northam district. Indeed, I had to do all the stirring up to get the Katanning people to move, for they did not seem to be very keen about securing what they had asked for on that occasion. However, an arrangement satisfactory to them has been made. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.0]: This measure is well understood because the subject was discussed at considerable length when it was originally introduced. It is a Bill designed to enable the grower to increase the price against the local consumer in order that the producer may be able to export some 70 per cent. of his product to overseas markets. The Minister has explained that without this legislation the grower cannot carry on. We in Western Australia, I believe, have more grape vine country than there is in any other part of Australia. The industry would not be controlled if we had as many acres of vines as there are in France. Some years ago France was gathering more wealth from vines than the whole of Australia was securing from its production of wheat and wool. Consequently, if any State has something to gain from a measure of this kind, it is Western Australia. All the same I consider it is legislation of very doubtful advantage to the people. We are very insistent that taxation should be reduced and this is a form of taxation applied to the whole of the people of the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: We do it also with dairying and various established industries.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is true. Recently the Economic Commission—really the Tariff Commission—made a report in which they pointed out that, apart from the tariff which brings in £41,000,000, we add to the price of commodities manufactured or produced £48,000,000 without increasing the value of the commodities. The £48,000,000 is added to the price of goods manufactured and goods raised by the primary producer and sold in Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Pater-son scheme costs Western Australia a lot of money.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is what is happening throughout Australia. By these artificial means we add about £6,000,000 to the price of sugar, about £4,000,000 to the price of butter and £3,000,000 to the price of dried fruit and other produce. At any rate, by various means, £22,000,000 is added to the price of primary products from Australian land and sold to Australian people. All such goods, of course, are sold at a lower price overseas. The people of Australia have become accustomed to the tariff duties and are be-

coming accustomed to these other means of adding to the cost of living. Western Australia probably pays about £3,000,000 a year for the joy of supporting tariffs, apart from the contribution through the Customs and Excise offices which comes to something over £3,000,000. So it is a pretty expensive job on which we are engaged—this business of increasing prices by tariffs and by the means we are indulging in under this legislation. Between the one and the other, we put the best part of £100,000,000 on to the price of goods. In a new country it is impossible to carry on without a tariff.

Mr. Sampson: We are creating millionaires in the Eastern States.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In the cities we are creating a false life, and we are creating burdens for the producers that are well nigh impossible for them to bear. Then, in this way and that way, we turn to the consumer and impose burdens on him in order that the producer, overborne by the tariff, may exist and carry on his business. I do not know where it will all end, but if we try to bonus everybody we shall soon be benefiting nobody. It is quite possible to benefit one section of the people to the hurt of another section, and that is what is being done. The end must come some day. The Minister inferred that the people of Western Australia are paying a great deal more for butter than they should be. If it be 3d. per lb., as it was, it is about 4s. 3d. per head of the population on the butter imported last year more than we should have paid. We are apt to think that 5s. here or 5s. there is nothing, but all the amounts of 5s. during the year make up a considerable sum for the man who is on the basic wage. I do not know just how much is the real benefit, or how much is the real disadvantage, where we shall get to, or what will be the end of this method of handling our affairs, what with Customs and Excise duties imposed by the Government and other burdens imposed as such legislation empowers the growers to impose on consumers. The Minister will say that this is done in the other States and that, unless we do it here, the industry will be crushed out of existence.

The Minister for Agriculture: They will swamp us.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They will swamp us, anyhow, but they would be a great annoyance to us in this industry, as they were before the original measure was

passed. Then we were very seriously disadvantaged by the shipment of some of the products of the Eastern States to Western Australia. We admit all that, but when we grow a little wiser, I think we shall look a little further for some other method of benefiting the primary producers. It is daily becoming more certain that primary production cannot continue if subjected to the ever-increasing burdens. If the primary producers take my advice, they will come together and demand a very considerable reduction in the cost of production due to artificial means, to an excessive tariff—I am not a free trader, of course—to excessive taxation by Federal and State Governments as well as by local authorities, and to other disadvantages which I need not mention now but which are probably patent to every member. With the Minister I believe that we can make this industry a very important one. I know, and I hope the Minister realises, that if we are to maintain the present standard of living, we must produce from the soil a great deal more than we are producing at present, in order that we may get the money necessary to pay for the goods we import. The real job before Australia is to increase the production of wealth—the national income. When currants are exported we are able to purchase in return something that we need from overseas. That is a point which must be kept in view, but it is an extraordinary and unfortunate thing that because of the system we have to say to the people of Australia, "Pay firstly through the Customs and secondly by an increased price due to these methods which do not increase the value of the article at all." I shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I hope I have made it clear that to me it is evident the farmer is paying far too much. The currant grower is getting a little back because our own people are being made to pay through the nose to the Federal Government. Some day we shall wake up and demand that the present state of affairs be altered. I told the House the other day that we have added 1s. to the cost of producing a bushel of wheat since 1913, owing to the increased tariff and to increased taxation. We shall not get any further by attempting to make people pay more for the wheat consumed within the State. It cannot be done, and it would be ridiculous to attempt such a thing. I hope the Minister will not attempt it; probably

he will not for the reason that too many people eat bread. Although I shall not vote against the second reading of the Bill, I know this is quite the wrong way of assisting the industry. The primary producers of Western Australia are being bled white by the many charges and disadvantages set up against them. Our job should be to go into this question and endeavour to relieve the burden imposed on primary production. It will have to be done before long. I hope the public will realise how much they pay and how often they pay, and that they will awaken to the awkward position into which we have drifted, a position which can lead only to disaster. If the whole question were grappled with now, it would be possible to avert disaster. Too much is spent by Governments, and it is quite enough for the primary producer to have to find the money that goes to them. It is quite another thing to have to find money for indirect taxation of this kind.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [5.14]: I favour the Bill and I am rather surprised that the principles contained in the Act are not more widely exercised in other directions. It has often been said, and it is generally thought, that Labour Governments favour control of marketing and other things, but while that may have been true with regard to the initiation of committee-of-direction methods in Queensland, it is equally true that under the present Government there, that method of marketing is being continued, and the results have proved, and are proving, that control, or organisation as it is more often described, is very much in the interests of the people engaged in producing. It has been shown to be impossible for those working on the land to remain there without organisation. I regret that the State Government have not carried out their promise in respect to organisation. We were assured in 1924 that a measure on the lines of the Queensland Committee of Protection Marketing Act would be brought down. True, we had a Primary Products Pool Bill which passed this House, but was defeated by one vote in another place. That is not a sufficient performance of the promises given. It is very difficult to secure full approval of a principle on one trial. With regard to control, as it has been tried out in this State, there is no doubt that it has proved beneficial.

Mr. Davy: To whom?

Mr. SAMPSON: Both to producers and consumers. The consumers would be in a worse position were it not for the Dried Fruits Act, the effect of which has been to retain on the land a great many producers, including returned soldiers. These men have shown a great deal of enterprise in securing advances to enable them to increase their production. I realise—and this point was referred to by the Leader of the Opposition—that because of the incidence of the high protection something must be done in certain cases to enable primary production to be carried out. The man on the land faces a very difficult position and carries an unreasonable burden. While he faces the competition of the world, he protects from the competition of the world those engaged in secondary industries. It may be argued that the latter are not paid so much better than is the case with those who are engaged in primary production. Many orchardists who own their own properties, although the orchards may be mortgaged, have shown a great deal of enterprise. They have the necessary plant, and carry on production. The returns are, however, in a very few cases equal to those secured by the tradesman who is working well defined hours and under specially good conditions. The return expressed in coin of the realm does not compare with that received by those engaged in secondary industries in our cities. It would be impossible for the Australian producers of dried fruits to compete with the growers of the Mediterranean and certain other parts of the world. This Bill has been brought down to protect our own people. I regret it has not been placed on the statute-book to remain there until such time as it is amended. Some day an enthusiastic wrecker may, by the exercise of a catch-cry, do something to bring about the defeat of this legislation. As it is, the growers, who have held no fewer than four special meetings, have carried motions in each case unanimously supporting the continuance of the Act and expressing the opinion that it is essential. Not long ago the member for West Perth said there were always rebels, people who wanted to oppose those who stood for uniformity in price. In this case there were no rebels. All were convinced that the Dried Fruits Act should be continued. They realised that without the control which this legislation gives, continuance on the land in the dried fruit industry would be an

impossibility. That is actually the position. Very good work has been done by the Dried Fruits Board. There has been no attempt to cloud the issue. The greatest possible candour has been shown by giving this matter the fullest publicity. The growers have benefited to the extent that they have been able to remain on the land. It may be thought from this that those who are producing dried fruits are particularly favoured. Such is not the case. It is only by the exercise of the greatest economy and exceptional industry that they have been able to continue even with the assistance of the Act. A point that is worthy of mention is the high regard in which Australian dried fruit is held throughout the world. There can be no question as to the cleanliness of that commodity, and the thoroughly efficient manner in which the fruit is put up. I am advised that Australian dried fruit usually obtains the highest price even in markets where there is no control. Where the competition is free, Australian dried fruits stand up to the world, and in most cases better prices are secured than by other kindred products. During the discussions concerning the dried fruit industry of Australia reference has been made to reciprocal arrangements between Australia and Canada. I am not referring to the debates in this House. I could hope it would be possible to do something in a practical way in this respect. Until we are enabled to do something towards securing some of the New Zealand trade, I question whether we can hope to secure trade in Canada. There should be greater trade reciprocity between Australia and New Zealand. It is difficult to understand why Dominion legislators and our Federal legislators do not get together and evolve something with this object in view. Some time ago when I was in New Zealand I required a bottle of brandy purely for medicinal purposes. I was anxious to secure Australian brandy, and tramped Wellington from hotel to hotel and store to store in search of it.

The Minister for Works: You must have been very sick.

Mr. SAMPSON: I wanted this for a friend as much as anything. Finally I was able to buy a bottle of Chateau Tanunda. There is no better brandy in the world. It is a sad reflection on the business ability of the people of the Commonwealth or the legislative acumen of our Federal members that Australian brandy is not more readily

obtainable in the Dominion. The Dominion legislators and the Commonwealth legislators must get together. That is a market which ought to be open to this country. The production of brandy is of special significance in respect to dried fruits. Some time ago I was at a town on the Murray, and saw a still which had been erected to deal with surplus dried fruits, the production being brandy. An enormous output is possible from Australia. I hope the Minister will take steps to secure as much of this market as possible, seeing that it lies so close to our doors. It is our duty to open it up if we can. I have no doubt the Bill will be passed by both Houses. For many years I have advocated organisation of the class contained in it.

Mr. Pantou: You are stone-walling it now.

Mr. SAMPSON: No. I want the hon. member to understand what is before the House. It is essential not merely to give a vote, but to advance reasons why one does so. In the circumstances I am justified in making these remarks. I have for years advocated the organisation of marketing. To be effective, that must be 100 per cent. efficient, and those intimately concerned must be 100 per cent. loyal. That is what the Bill provides. Unless 100 per cent. of loyalty is secured, there are rebels who will steal behind the loyalists. Something like 10 per cent. of the people are usually found to object to any measure that is good, and are willing to wreck the efforts of those who are loyal and who feel that much good can be secured by the passing of certain legislation. I regret that this Bill should have to be brought down every year. In the circumstances that may be necessary, but it is wrong, as it is a standing invitation to someone who has not the interests of dried fruit growers at heart to do something to kill this legislation.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [5.29]: I opposed the Bill that was originally brought down, and naturally I must oppose this continuance Bill.

Mr. Pantou: You are consistent, any way.

Mr. DAVY: The measure we are seeking to continue is the most perfect specimen of legislative futility that was ever brought before any House of Parliament.

Mr. Sampson: The Eastern States agreed to it after grave consideration.

Mr. DAVY: I have known all the States of Australia to do stupid things at once, and of all the people of Australia to do stupid things at once, as they did quite recently.

Mr. Panton: Surely the minority did not do a stupid thing.

Mr. DAVY: The real object of this legislation is to compel the citizens of Western Australia to continue to support, at their own expense, an industry that cannot support itself, and which the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) has told us never will be able to support itself.

Mr. Sampson: Not with the present incidence of high protection.

Mr. DAVY: This measure not only provides license to the growers of dried fruits throughout Western Australia to rob everyone else, but gives them a statutory mandate to do so. Disobedience will be followed with punishment for a criminal offence. The majority of growers of dried fruits in this State are a fine body of men. As the member for Swan reminded us, many of them served their country in the Great War with distinction and courage. They are strong, industrious and enterprising men. Now we propose not only to deprive the State of the strength, courage and enterprise of these men, but to keep them employed in an industry where their strength, courage and enterprise will never be of any use whatever to them or to the State. In Western Australia, where there is so much to be done that is profitable, and so many avenues for the employment of strength, courage and enterprise that will be profitable not only to the person who exercises those qualities but to all the citizens of the State as well, it is amazing to think we would design this legislation to keep a number of our citizens in an industry which, the member for Swan tells us, never can be carried on here except at a loss.

Mr. Panton: They do this sort of thing in connection with sugar in Queensland, so why not here?

Mr. DAVY: That argument deserves the smile that distinguishes the face of the hon. member who interjected.

Mr. Sampson: But it requires to be answered.

Mr. DAVY: I will accept the interjection of the member for Menzies (Mr. Panton), who asks why it should not be done here seeing that it is done in Queensland.

Mr. Panton: I said that if they could do it for sugar in Queensland, we could do it here for our dried fruits.

Mr. DAVY: It may be suggested that this is an argument in favour of doing it in Queensland.

Mr. Sampson: There the growers get a direct bounty.

Mr. DAVY: I did not interrupt the member for Swan! I shall not be long with my remarks! The only argument I have heard in favour of bolstering up in Australia industries that cannot be carried on here at a profit is that relating to defence. It is said that sugar is an absolute necessity for the people of Australia and that if we did not produce enough for our own consumption, should war eventuate and a blockade exist, our people would suffer from want of sugar. It has also been said that we could not occupy that part of Queensland except by growing sugar and that we dare not leave it empty, and that therefore protection was necessary in order to enable the industry to carry on. I do not think that argument is really sound.

Mr. Panton: Was it not on account of the White Australia policy as well?

Mr. DAVY: It cannot be suggested that those parts of Western Australia where dried fruits are produced, cannot be used for any other purpose.

Mr. Panton: Yes, that is all!

Mr. DAVY: I would be amazed to think that that was so. I do not believe it is so, and I am sure the member for Swan would not agree with that statement.

Mr. Sampson: It is not more true than the statement that Queensland can be used only for sugar growing.

Mr. DAVY: I did not use that argument myself; I said that that statement had been made. Surely the argument cannot be advanced that in order to keep Australia white our Australian growers should be kept in the dried fruit industry in the Swan district. In fact, we produce by these artificial means not only enough for our own consumption but ten times that quantity, and make the people of Western Australia carry the burden of producing at a loss that large quantity of dried fruits, of which they consume only a tithe themselves. It seems to me that if what the member for Swan said is true, and the dried-fruits industry can never carry on profitably here without this most vicious form of protection, then the sooner the dried-fruits industry goes out of existence the better it will be for Western Australia. If the price of wheat went down to a hopelessly unprofitable figure, how could we logically refuse

the wheat farmer the same protection that the Bill gives to the producer of dried fruits? That would simply mean the completion of this silly, vicious circle, and, in due course, we will have to be prepared to put up the shutters. This question has been debated at length on previous occasions and I find myself almost alone crying in the wilderness. Having made my protest, I leave it at that.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.36]: There was a lot of sound logic in the remarks of the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy). If we were dealing with the policy for the whole of Australia, I would strongly support his arguments in opposition to the Bill. I was certainly luke warm on a previous occasion when the principal Act was discussed. On the whole, I am opposed to compulsory legislation of this description.

Mr. Mann: You put up a good speech against it.

Mr. THOMSON: There is no reason why we should close our eyes to the fact that our dried fruits industry is in a parlous condition, and unless we exercise some kind of control we will be in the unfortunate position of driving many growers off their holdings. I do not think that is the desire of any member of this Chamber. If we followed the arguments of the member for West Perth when he said it would be better for these men to get off their blocks and engage in some other form of cultivation from which they could make a living, I would like to know what particular avenue he would suggest, seeing that none of them offers any inducement at the present time. Our primary industries are being developed in accordance with the policy dictated by a majority of the people of Australia.

Hon. G. Taylor: That will be altered now.

Mr. Panton: It has not been altered during the last six years, and I do not know that you should expect much now.

Mr. THOMSON: Had there not been such a turnover, we might have had a reasonable chance of an alteration, but the people of Australia in no unmistakable voice have expressed themselves as opposed to any attempt to reduce the tariff. The outlook at present appears to be hopeless. The dried fruits industry last year was worth about £110,298 to Western Australia and I am informed by those engaged in the industry that under normal conditions they have a chance

of making a reasonable living. I am rather concerned regarding the general administration of the Dried Fruits Board. When the Act was before us originally, I did not vote against it, but I certainly did criticise some actions of the board. I recognise that the members of the Dried Fruits Board have a difficult task to perform. They are not entirely independent, because they have to work in conjunction with the boards in the Eastern States. I do not wish to cast any reflection upon the board members, but I will make a suggestion that I commend to the Minister's consideration. It seems to me it would be of advantage if one or two business men were appointed to the board. The present members do their best but I believe that the addition of even one fully qualified business man might result in benefit to the growers from the selling point of view. There is another direction in which we could effect economies. We have seven or eight packing sheds throughout Western Australia, and there must be considerable overhead charges involved. I believe it would be possible to process the whole of the products of Western Australia in two packing sheds. If that could be done, we would effect an advancement in the industry by reducing the cost of production. I am greatly in sympathy with the endeavours of the Dried Fruits Board and of those who are engaged in the industry. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, because I believe it represents the only way by which we can give the growers a chance to earn a reasonable income. Last year there was a certain quantity of dried fruits from Mildura sold throughout the Great Southern districts. That is not in the interests of the Mildura growers, nor yet of the Western Australian growers. We require co-ordination and co-operation between our board and those operating in the Eastern States so as to eliminate overlapping and to reduce the selling cost, not only to the people of Western Australia, but to purchasers overseas as well. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, not because I believe in measures of this description, but because it furnishes, in my opinion, the only hope by which the industry will be able to carry on. I trust that endeavours will be made to encourage the consumption of dried fruits in every way possible. There certainly could be a substantial increase in the consumption. Dried fruits are looked upon as a luxury to-day. They rarely find a place on our

tables in the Parliamentary dining-room. We should cultivate in our young folk a desire to use dried fruits in preference to sweets. The Government might consider the advisability of furnishing the growers with a little financial assistance in order to prosecute a publicity campaign, and thus increase the consumption of their products. So far as my limited knowledge goes I understand that raisins are very much healthier and better for children than sweets. Raisins do not affect the teeth and eating them means better health all round. If the industry could get a little assistance from the Government, a very useful purpose would be served. The Government render help to the goldmining and other industries, so why can they not treat this one somewhat similarly? The industry is suffering to some extent from the disabilities of Federation. Possibly we might be able to utilise a portion of the special grant for the purpose of fostering the consumption of dried fruits. We might also send a lecturer to the various schools to talk to the children on the advisableness of eating more raisins. I commend these suggestions to the Minister and trust he will be able to find means of giving some financial assistance to the industry, thus enabling it to get some publicity and so increasing the consumption of the commodity. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [5.48]: When the parent measure was before us last session, I took up a certain attitude not in opposition to the Bill, but in the direction of amending it. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) spoke in strong terms against the second reading. I went into it and found that certain sections of the dried fruits areas would not benefit by the Bill; the Bill was really for the compact areas and those localities where the greater quantities of fruits were produced. I endeavoured to amend the Bill in the direction of extending its operations to the Katanning district, but I did not get sufficient support. It was a Government measure and the Government had its numbers, and there was no chance of my succeeding. It is, however, refreshing to know that that debate in the House last year served a purpose. The Katanning people are now allowed to grade and pack in their own area. The Minister went so far as to say that he believed that if the

Toodyay district, another dried fruit area, made application to the board, they would get permission to do likewise.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say anything like that at all; I said they would have their case considered.

HON. G. TAYLOR: That was the Ministerial way of putting it to the deputation. I am proud to think that the board would deal directly with the matter, not consider it. Anyway, that is beside the question. We do know that one dried fruit area has been granted permission which I desired to get last year in this very Bill. That is something I am pleased to know, because we do not want to circumscribe our legislation in this House. We want to legislate for all, and not to give a special privilege to anyone. The Bill, as it was before us last year, did favour a large section of dried fruit growers. I do not believe in that kind of legislation at all, but the conditions and exigencies of the situation impelled the House to take up the attitude the Minister wishes us to adopt by continuing the Act. If we do not agree to the Bill, we may be the means of preventing a large number of people producing dried fruits. But it only means carrying this sort of legislation a step further and we shall find there will hardly be any industry in the Commonwealth that will not be bolstered up. It will not be possible to go much further without reaching the limit. On this occasion I shall support the Bill, but I am sorry it is only a continuing measure. There is really no justification for its being such. The people who are producing dried fruits evidently have embarked upon the industry with the intention of carrying it on in the years to come, and to give them merely a 12 months' tenure is not enough. We are told that if the Bill is not agreed to they will not be able to continue operations. Is that not a strong argument in favour of giving them longer tenure? Let us continue the existing Act until it is found necessary to amend it or repeal it. It would have been much more reasonable if the Minister had brought in a Bill of that nature. Perhaps the Minister will explain why it is necessary to have it as an annual affair? We have tried the Dried Fruits Act and it has proved a success. That should be abundant evidence in favour of its being made a permanent statute.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [5.53]: In supporting the Bill I wish to refer to something that was said in the session when the parent Act was introduced. I have been criticised for opposing the Act when it was before us last session. I did nothing of the kind. My speech dealt with the action of the board itself in connection with sultanas. A resolution had been carried that 90 per cent. of the sultanas grown in Western Australia should be exported. I objected to that at the time and it was the first that the Minister had heard of it. I am pleased to say that the Minister rectified the matter. Another objection I had to the existing Act when it was before us was that I considered it wrong to export sultanas when we did not produce sufficient for our own use, and it seemed wrong that representatives of the growers themselves should carry such a resolution and try to put it into effect. It was fortunate that the House learned of that position and the result now is that sultanas grown in Western Australia are sold for local consumption. A little while ago I accompanied the board to Toodyay to meet the growers in conference. The board have since met growers in other centres. At Toodyay the gathering was not largely representative, but the chairman and members of the board explained to the growers what the position was. They asked whether a packing shed was required in the district, and the conclusion was arrived at that it was not required. Consequently no further action was taken. Last session the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) opposed the Bill on the ground that the cost of taking the fruit from Katanning to Perth and back again would be excessive. The board have gone to a lot of trouble to meet the growers and secure their advice, and now we find that the opposition that existed last year is no longer evident. The Bill is in the interests of the dried fruit producers, and I intend to support the second reading.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.57]: I intend to support the Bill in a very few words, and in doing so I wish to refer to the consumption of dried fruits. Like the member for Swan, I am of opinion that the industry cannot be supported without this measure and that at the same time we should do our utmost to largely increase the consumption of dried fruits, and so assist to put the industry well on its feet. If the

growers were able to disseminate information about the value of dried fruits, they would stampede the public into a consumption that would be three or four times greater than it is to-day. Take a homely instance. Oatmeal porridge is a popular breakfast dish in Western Australia.

Mr. Wilson: Hear, hear!

Mr. NORTH: By a simple alteration that oatmeal porridge could be made much more palatable by using with it raisins in the place of sugar or salt. Many advocate that homely alteration, and it has been followed in domestic circles though not perhaps in hotels where they always serve oatmeal porridge with salt or sugar. The public should have it pointed out to them, or it might be taught to the children in the schools, that oatmeal porridge and sugar is not too good to eat because it makes the blood acid. The use of raisins grown in the Swan district, in the place of sugar would upset that acidity by restoring the alkalinity to the blood. If some Heaven-sent beings could make this widely known, then we would have every home in the State, that is, every home where porridge was consumed, using the popular raisins in the place of sugar. It should be generally broadcast that raisins are known to be 40 per cent. alkaline, and that they are blood cleansers; also that they undo the harm done by the consumption of so much bread and meat. Raisins do incalculable good to the system, and bearing that in mind we should eat more, and so benefit ourselves, and at the same time assist the industry. We should see to it that the food experts adopt the correct propaganda. If we could only get the right information broadcast, there would be a far greater demand for dried fruits, and our meals could be made more pleasing. If anyone has not tried oatmeal porridge and raisins, I suggest he should do so, and I guarantee he will never revert to sugar.

Hon. G. Taylor: I will try the raisins without the porridge.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Council notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's amendment on the Council's amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1929-30.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Pantou in the Chair.

Department of the Minister for Public Works and Labour (Hon. A. McCallum, Minister).

Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £124,992:

THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS AND LABOUR (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [6.7]: In the Public Works Department estimates there is little relating to revenue, by far the largest proportion of the expenditure deriving from Loan Funds. Revenue applies only to Public Works Department salaries, over which neither the Government nor Parliament have much control, as they are fixed by the Public Service Appeal Board. Outside salaries, not much of the expenditure of the department appears on these Estimates, as the bulk of it is dealt with on the Loan Estimates. For the current financial year the estimated expenditure on salaries is £118,073, and that for labour £15,111, making a total of £133,184, which, compared with last year's actual expenditure of £97,712, shows an increase of £20,361. Last year's expenditure on labour was £13,580, and this year's estimate therefore shows an increase of £21,892. The main item of increase is main roads. Our contribution from revenue shows an increase of £17,000, which almost accounts for the total increase in the department's estimates. In respect of rents for office accommodation there is an increase of £1,400, and in respect of minor items an increase of £1,035. On a previous occasion I explained that the department anticipated an unexpended balance of at least half a million for main roads work at the end of June last. The figures disclose an actual balance of £852,868 unexpended at the 30th June, 1929. This means that the current year's normal programme

of £672,000, added to the unexecuted portion of last year's programme, involves a total expenditure of something over 1½ millions sterling. Of that amount one-eighth, representing the State's proportion, is chargeable to revenue. Thus the revenue will be chargeable with £81,689 on that account. The item of rents for office accommodation includes an overcharge in respect of the Government Savings Bank of £1,600 for the last two years. The increase of £476 relating to the Arbitration Court is due almost wholly to the special inquiry into the basic wage made by the Arbitration Court on the goldfields during this year. The factories section shows an increase of £1,055, due mainly to annual increments. Only one additional appointment has been made in that section, and part of the new official's salary is provided here. A special inspection was made by the Chief Inspector of Factories of the shearing sheds in the North-West, mainly in the Pilbara and Gascoyne districts. This is the first inspection made by a departmental inspector since the enabling legislation was passed. Up to then all the inspections had been made by the police.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did you find the police inspections satisfactory?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not yet examined the Chief Inspector's report, but it is lying on my table. In connection with the Public Works Department there is very little on these Estimates that calls for explanation. The Main Roads Board are now making large inroads into their arrears, letting contracts at the rate of over £100,000 per month. Great progress is being made, as is evident not only from the contracts let but from the amount of work being done. It is not anticipated that the Main Roads Board will be level with their work by the end of the year, but they should get pretty close to it.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is largely the reason why you had so much unexpended money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Contract work was insisted upon, and plans and specifications had therefore to be prepared, involving the sending-out of surveyors on every road. One consequence was that developmental roads were held up for a whole year. Now, however, good headway is being made with the work. On the items I shall be glad to supply any particulars in my possession.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam [6.13]: The Minister for Works has explained that salaries are largely in the keeping of the Public Service Appeal Board, and that thus we have but little say in regard to the expenditure in this division, unless we absolutely object altogether to an officer or his work, which does not often occur. It has never been the custom of members on this side of the Chamber to indulge in much criticism of individual public servants. I was rather amused at something that appeared in the report of the proceedings of the conference of public servants. They started off by moving a motion to the effect that it was uneconomical to employ women in the Public Service, as this led to unemployment. That motion was altered to read that the employment of women was uneconomical until such time as women and men received the same salaries. Everybody seems to think that women ought not to be employed; no one has the pluck to say, "Don't employ women at all." The motion as amended and the original motion were totally at variance. Why cannot people say in plain English what they are really aiming at?

Hon. G. Taylor Yes. In plain English, the desire is to get rid of women.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would rather see women well married.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I notice that the Minister has included an amount of £10,000 that is debited against the Main Roads Board, and there is a credit for the Public Works Department of £10,000 for work done by the department for the Main Roads Board. We are drifting into the habit of transferring Revenue debits to Loan. I know it has always been the custom to transfer almost the whole of the expenditure by the Public Works Department on public works to Loan, because nearly all such works are carried out from Loan funds. On the other hand, I am hanged if I can understand how the Public Works Department could have done £10,000 worth of work for the Main Roads Board.

The Minister for Works: Mainly drafting.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I understand the Main Roads Board have their own draftsmen.

The Minister for Works: Until recently the Public Works Department carried out the drafting work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And the draftsmen have now been transferred to the Main Roads Board?

The Minister for Works: Not all, but a number of them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I understood that they were all under the Main Roads Board now, and that the cost of the work was debited against the funds of the board. If that is so, we should not transfer £10,000 from Loan to Revenue account. On looking through the Estimates, I find that that sort of thing has been done to a great extent. There are some items that we shall need to discuss, and I shall refer to them later on. There is an amount debited against the Main Roads Board of £40,000 for this year in connection with construction work. If the whole of the money available from the Federal Aid Roads Grant were used during the year, it would mean an expenditure of £80,000 from Revenue and something like £600,000 altogether from Loan funds. I do not know where that money will come from. All the indications to-day are that it will be difficult to secure loan funds. The Financial Agreement shuts us off from London, and we have to depend upon the Federal Government raising money for us. The Premier said we had not raised any money for over 12 months.

Mr. Thomson: It would not be profitable to raise a loan at the present moment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, the interest rate would be high. While we have not raised a loan on the London market, we have borrowed money freely. I should say that our London overdraft must be nearly up to the limit. I suppose it is now nearly £2,000,000. As at the 30th June last we had borrowed £400,000 from the Federal Treasury; we had drawn, under every possible heading, every possible penny we could get; we had used all the credits in the various trust accounts. It will be seen that we have used a considerable sum of money. The Minister told us that he required the £40,000 to provide his revenue part of the expenditure that he estimates at something like £600,000 from our own Loan funds. I have already pointed out that £40,000 will not be enough.

The Minister for Works: Not for the full programme?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. If the Minister uses all the loan money he anticipates, he will require over £40,000. It is unsatisfactory that we should transfer money from Loan to revenue account, and highly unsatisfactory to be compelled to hold up all the money that is available for us, and which we might have spent from the Federal grant during the past two years. People have been out of work and the Minister explained that he was unable to use the funds at his disposal, because he was compelled to call tenders for the work he wished to carry out. But that was provided for in the agreement with the Federal Government, which was signed by the Minister himself.

The Minister for Works: We are in the same position as the other States; we are in the same boat.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I suppose the other States expected the Federal Government to agree to the work being carried out by day labour. The Federal Government would not agree to Western Australia doing that, so money has accumulated while many of our people have been out of work and starving.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Government have had some difficulty in raising their 15s.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They will have more difficulty this year.

The Minister for Works: We have not, so far.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government have not experienced that difficulty because they have not been spending the money that they could have spent. If the Government had spent £800,000, and in addition the £600,000 they will have to raise, there would have been some difficulty. I hope that the position will be easier during the coming 12 months. If the work can be put in hand and £1,500,000 is expended, that will keep a great number of men in employment, and keep many of them at work all through the year. I hope the Minister will be able to secure the money and carry out the road work that is contemplated. There have been complaints regarding extravagance on the part of the Main Roads Board. There always will be such complaints. What we require in Western Australia is to get better value for all money we spend. The fact that we do not get full value for the money spent is what has produced so much

unemployment throughout the State. By means of the tariff and other causes, the cost of living and the cost of commodities have been kept up. It is utterly impossible to get anything like the true value for money spent, particularly when it is spent by a Government department. It is quite useless to question salary items in connection with this or any other department, but there are a few regarding which there should be some discussion, and respecting which we should be given information that we desire to have.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.40]: When he introduced his Estimates, the Minister for Works drew attention to the fact that the bulk of the increased expenditure of his department was due to Arbitration Court awards and other considerations over which the department could exercise no control. That really places the Committee in a somewhat similar position. In the division covered by the Minister's Estimates, we find there is an increase of 15 employees only under the heading of salaries generally. Although there are decreases under some headings, to which I shall refer later, we find there is an increase of £20,000 odd. The fourth annual report of the Department of Labour contains the following paragraph:—

In January, 1927, the Government decided to grant long service leave to wages men in the Government employ, such leave to be on the basis then operating in the Railway Department in regard to salaried officers. Industrial agreements embodying the new conditions were entered into with the unions concerned, and were duly registered at the Court of Arbitration. The conditions provide that all full-time wage employees in the various departments, who have served continuously for ten or more years after attaining the age of 18 years, will be entitled, subject to the regulations, to three months' long-service leave, to be granted at the convenience of the department.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member should deal with this phase when we discuss the Estimates of the Department of Labour.

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with the position generally, and have practically concluded what I wish to quote. The paragraph also sets out—

The provisions were not retrospective except in the sense that every wages man who had completed ten years' continuous service or more on the 31st December, 1926, was immediately entitled to three months' leave, but no more.

I am not going to question the granting of long service leave to these men because if it is fair for one section of the employees, it is equally so for another. In glancing through the Estimates, I find that an increase is provided for this department whereas the number of employees in the other departments remains practically the same as before. In the circumstances, one might be pardoned for asking whether the granting of long service leave has been responsible for the employment of 15 additional men. For a long time I have contended that a superannuation scheme would be better for the employees. When we have a compulsory retiring age such as that which operates throughout the civil service, long service leave may be of advantage to the younger employees and to those who are single, but the married men are in a different position. To those with families it certainly provides a holiday, but I believe a superannuation fund would be of far more material benefit to them when they arrived at the retiring age. Some of the appointments that have been made recently concern men who are over the retiring age, while others who have passed that age are still retained in the service. I am not offering any criticism of the Government in that respect, but in most instances when an officer has reached the retiring age, he is passed out of the service. This seems somewhat hard in connection with men who have spent their lifetime in rendering service to the State. Very often the years of experience gained must be valuable to the State, but, in accordance with the regulations, that experienced official has to be retired. I would much prefer that the money it costs the State for long service leave were put into a superannuation fund, because I believe that in the long run it would be better for the employees. If the Public Accounts were placed on the Table and an opportunity given for perusing them, one would be in a very much better position to give a fair and impartial criticism of the administration of the department. At times one wonders whether we are getting full value for our money. It is impossible, of course, for the Minister in his supervision to see that we get full value from the whole of our employees. Dealing with the constructional work of the Main Roads Board, while there may have been certain delay in the preparation of the necessary plans and specifications—I know the Minister is prepared to debate this point with me, for

he is an ardent believer in the day-work system—it does seem to me we have been getting better value for the work done by the contractors and the local authorities than we had when the day-work system was in vogue. I admit that in the earlier stages of constructional work the department were working under considerable disadvantages. Consistently have I been in favour of having a check on the departmental work. I could give instances of work done for practically half the amount of the departmental estimate. In my own district recently certain work was required to be done, and the estimate submitted was outrageous. When it was referred to me for my opinion—I being a practical man in the line for which the estimate was submitted—I was able to tell the departmental head that the estimate was very high. Eventually they allowed the work to be done by the people themselves, and I can assure the Committee that we saved at least £30 on the departmental estimate of £81. I am giving that illustration as showing the advantage of having a check on departmental estimates. In that instance the work was done for two-thirds of the amount of the estimate. I am sure the same thing will be found in a lot of the constructional work being done departmentally. Whilst probably the contractors do make a few pounds occasionally, there is the knowledge that when a tender is submitted, the contractor has to complete his work at the price quoted. Recently the work on the Wiluna railway was held up for a short period. The difference—whatever it was—has been adjusted, but whether it means additional cost I do not know, for I am going only on the statement that appeared in the Press. The probabilities are that the concession or agreement that has been entered into means additional cost in the construction of the railway.

The Minister for Works: No, the work is being done more cheaply.

Mr. THOMSON: As a result of the decision? I am pleased to hear that. However, it is an amazing thing that the engineers in charge should have resisted the request and so occasioned delay.

The Minister for Works: We are now going to get one mile per day constructed, instead of three-quarters of a mile.

Mr. THOMSON: And are going to employ considerably more men.

The Minister for Works: For the strength of the gangs, it means more work than we

had before. You made the statement that it was going to cost more.

Mr. THOMSON: One would assume that it would cost more.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This is a matter for the Loan Estimates.

Mr. THOMSON: No, for some of the officers are paid salaries.

The CHAIRMAN: Their salaries will go on, apart from this question.

Mr. THOMSON: I was dealing with the construction of main roads, which is provided for here.

The CHAIRMAN: You were dealing with railway construction.

Mr. THOMSON: Railway construction also is provided for here. I am on the general discussion, not on any item, and I hope you will permit me to illustrate my point. I am pleased to hear the statement of the Minister that it is going to mean cheaper construction. That is very satisfactory. But if it is so, it is amazing that in the first place the departmental officers refused to accept the system.

The Minister for Works: The departmental officers initiated it at my request. What was the dispute about, if we did not initiate it?

Mr. THOMSON: I cannot understand that there should be any dispute if it meant a saving to the department.

The Minister for Works: The men wanted to continue constructing three-quarters of a mile per day, and we initiated the alteration to one mile per day. It is the first time in the history of Australia that such a thing has been done. It means two shifts, each doing half a mile per day.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: With two sets of men?

The Minister for Works: Yes, with two shifts of men.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And the two shifts of men will do each half a mile per day?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This is all distinctly out of order.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is all very interesting, Mr. Chairman, and so I ask for a quorum. I call attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung; quorum formed.

Mr. THOMSON: Reverting to that railway construction, I hope the Minister is right. Yet according to all the rules, if one

gang can lay three-quarters of a mile per day, then to have two gangs laying one mile per day between them is not much of an advantage.

The Minister for Works: There are not so many men in each gang.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course the Minister has the advantage as to the facts, but it does seem strange that if one gang can lay three-quarters of a mile per day, two gangs can lay only one mile per day between them. There may be a saving, but it seems to me the overhead expenses must be the same. However, I will not continue in that strain, as I am not in a position to discuss it with the Minister. No doubt the Minister will give us some more information when we come to the items. The Government have provided on the Estimates £40,000 for the construction of main roads from revenue. Doubtless if the money is available they will be able to expedite the construction of main roads in an endeavour to overcome the arrears that have accumulated. The Minister can rest assured of any assistance this side of the House may be able to give in the effort to find employment for men out of work. One might, perhaps, query an item here which is showing an decrease on last year's expenditure; I refer to traffic expenses on railways under construction. Judging from that item on the Estimates, we are not going to have a vigorous railway construction policy during the coming year. In view of the limited amount of money that will be available to the Government for public works this year, one wonders whether it would not be wiser to construct railways instead of roads, and so provide facilities for those who have gone out on to the land. Many of those men will be in a position to produce next year, but unfortunately will not be able to produce profitably because they are 40 or 50 or even 70 miles away from a railway. The Minister for Works expects to spend on the construction of roads £1,500,000, one-half of which, of course, will come from the Federal Aid Road Grant. The Government might well consider whether it would not be better to spend a little more on railways. Under the 3,500 farms scheme we have thrown open a great deal of land and the settlers, accepting the conditions on which the land has been made available, have gone out as far as 70 miles from an existing railway. Some of them have spent up to £700 and £800 of their own money.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he is making a speech on the general Estimates, not on the departmental Estimates. He has been dealing with railways, and now he is dealing with land settlement.

Mr. THOMSON: The reason why—

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to know the reason, but the hon. member is out of order. His discussion might be in order if offered on the Lands Estimates.

Mr. THOMSON: I admit I could discuss this subject on the Lands Estimates, but the point is that we have here £40,000 for the construction of main roads.

The CHAIRMAN: And you have been discussing railways.

Mr. THOMSON: Under another item we have provision of £4,600 for traffic expenses on railways under construction. I am directing the attention of the Committee to a phase that is well worthy of consideration, because it affects the development of the State. I have no desire to transgress the rules, but I think I should be able to deal with the point.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, in the right way.

Mr. THOMSON: I thought I was dealing with it in the right way. However, I shall raise some questions on the items. No member would attempt to reduce the Estimates, because we all know the futility of it. I once had the temerity to move that the Estimates be reduced by 10 per cent. and was immediately accused of attempting to reduce the salaries of civil servants and others to that extent. Of course the accusation was absurd, as the officials are governed by awards and agreements made with the Public Service Commissioner. My only desire was to obtain better value for the money. At times one feels that it should be possible to obtain more than we are getting for the money spent on salaries. That, however, is a matter of opinion. In the service we have some very capable officers. When we discuss the Lands Department I intend to mention some of the officers. I have no objection to the passing of these Estimates. Even if we wiped out the vote, the money for salaries would have to be found. Though we go through the form of passing the Estimates, the country is already committed to the expenditure. Much as Ministers might desire to reduce expenditure, they have little real control over it.

MR. MANN (Perth) [8.3]: What was the cost of bringing out the expert engineer from England to report on the Fremantle harbour?

The Minister for Works: That matter comes under the Premier's department.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [8.4]: The Public Works Estimates are largely made up of salaries and recoups from loan to revenue. Consequently, it is of little use prolonging the general discussion. However, there are certain items on which I desire some information. For instance, there is a recoup of £119,149 out of a total vote of £124,992. That seems rather confusing. I do not suggest that the Estimates are misleading. They have been compiled on practically the same lines as in former years, but it seems that an explanation is needed to inform us exactly how the money is expended, and whether it is expended precisely as the Committee intended.

Item, Salaries generally, £37,522:

Mr. THOMSON: Why has there been an increase from 68 to 83 officers, whereas the staff of the other departments remains the same?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These Estimates show an increase over the expenditure of last year of £8,511. Last year two officers had leave on half-pay, but they will receive full pay this year. Nine officers have been transferred to this section from the temporary staff, and three probationary engineers will be appointed to assist the engineers during the year. Eight vacancies are to be filled, three for draftsmen—applications have already been called—and five for assistant engineers. The member for Katanning suggested that the increase might represent the cost of long-service leave. He should understand that all the staff dealt with on these Estimates have had long-service leave for many years. All that the present Government have done is to give long-service leave to wages men, who are casual employees and are largely paid out of loan money.

Hon. G. Taylor: These are staff men?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and long-service leave has been the rule ever since they have been in the service.

Mr. Thomson: Are the engineers required for main road work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, for public works.

Item, recoup to Mines Department for services rendered, £100:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Last year a similar amount was voted and expended. I suppose the item is for work done by the Public Works Department for the Mines Department out of loan expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Work is done by one department for another and loan money is voted. We incur the expense, just as does a contractor, and the recoup takes place.

Mr. THOMSON: Following Item 193 is a deduction of £74,406, which is a decrease of £8,768 compared with the expenditure of last year. Can the Minister explain it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Last year I gave the hon. member a lengthy explanation of that matter. The heads of departments have to certify to the time and service that officers render on loan work and their activity on revenue work. The Auditor General then deals with the matter. The certificate of the head of the department is generally accepted. The money is paid out of revenue and a recoup is received from loan subsequently.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Does the system of recoups adopted in these Estimates reveal the exact financial position, or does it tend to make our revenue look better or worse? It seems strange that we should estimate an expenditure of £124,992 and should show recoups amounting to £119,149. It is very difficult for the average man investigating our public accounts to arrive at the exact position.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I explained at the outset that most of the public works activities are financed from loan money and that makes the percentage recoup from loan seem large. Engineers, draftsmen, and other officers devote the bulk of their time to loan works, and after they have been paid, a recoup is made from the particular job to which their time has been allotted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is a large amount for services rendered to the Main Roads Board.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A lot of the staff have been shifted to the Marquis-street office, where they will be directly under the eye of the head draftsman. Under that arrangement he will be better able to

allocate the work. When the Main Roads Board was established I assured the House that we would not build up a big department. The records are kept by the board, but the accounts, costs, and drafting work is done by the Works Department.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the survey work, too?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, the Main Roads Board have their own engineers. The whole of the drafting staff is paid from the Public Works Vote and the actual time occupied on main road work is debited to the Main Roads Board. About 20 draftsmen have been moved to Marquis-street, but a lot of the work is still done at the Works Department. Under the existing arrangement it is possible to utilise the draftsmen for water supply work, road work, bridge work, or harbour work, wherever the pressure occurs. If each branch were separated by watertight compartments, we should lose the elasticity possible under the present system.

Item, Rents for Office accommodation, Mining Registrar's quarters, Police Quarters, Pensioners' Allowances in lieu of Quarters, etc.—£3,600:

Mr. THOMSON: Is this item merely for expenditure in country districts?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. THOMSON: It does not apply to the metropolitan area?

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. THOMSON: Are any rents now being paid in the city for Government offices, or are they all situated in Government buildings?

The Minister for Works: I think the Wyndham Meat Works are the only offices housed in other than Government buildings.

Mr. THOMSON: Is any progress being made in connection with the construction of central Government offices? Has the Minister any information on the subject?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government appointed a committee of officers to report upon the most suitable site for central Government offices. We realised that it would be more economical to have all officers housed in the one building, and that this would facilitate the transaction of Government business in preference to their being scattered all over the city. That committee reported to Cabinet, and named several sites in their order of preference.

The matter has been discussed by Cabinet on several occasions, but no decision has yet been arrived at. The question of providing funds now for big buildings is a difficult one, but this should not hinder us from coming to a decision as to the site. Values are rising considerably, and the sooner we arrive at and get hold of the most suitable site, the more economical will the outlay be.

Item, Insurance on Public Buildings, Contribution to Insurance fund, £2,000:

Mr. THOMSON: To what buildings does this item refer?

The Minister for Works: To all Government buildings.

Item, Main Road Contribution—Construction Main Roads, £40,000:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is the only item under which we can discuss the work of the Main Roads Board generally. I should like to know how the materials are purchased. A lot of money has been spent in oil, tar, and other road material. Are tenders called in every case, and are the lowest tenders always accepted? Who accepts the tenders?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Since the establishment of the Main Roads Board we have insisted on the same procedure being followed as is followed in all Government departments. The Tender Board deal with the lot. The Main Roads Board make their recommendations as to what is required in the way of bitumen, oil, tar, etc. The Tender Board then call tenders. These are examined by the Main Roads Board and sent on for approval. The same thing is done in the purchase of materials for all other Government departments. We thought it would be better to use the existing State machinery than create an entirely separate organisation.

Mr. MANN: Would the Tender Board consult with the Main Roads Board or the Public Works Department as to the value of the tenders, and as to whether one tender was more acceptable to the Main Roads Board than another, or would they be guided only by price?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: First of all the headings of what is required and the descriptions are set out by the Main Roads Board. These are then transmitted to the Tender Board for action. The Ten-

der Board calls for tenders, and these are opened by that board and sent on to the Main Roads Board. The Tender Board say "the following prices have been received in reply to tenders invited." The Main Roads Board then examine the tenders and make their recommendation to me as Minister. They advise that for bitumen this tender be accepted, for metal that tender, and for tar some other tender. On my approval the Tender Board act. If steel rails are required we call for tenders in the Old Country and here at the same time. The prices obtained are submitted to the Engineer-in-Chief who makes his recommendation. When the Minister has given his approval, the recommendation goes to the Tender Board for the acceptance of the tender indicated. The head of the department has to approve, and make his recommendation to the Minister before a tender is actually accepted by the Tender Board.

Mr. Mann: Then the Tender Board are really the agents, and have no responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not say the Tender Board were the agents. They do everything in connection with the matter, but, before a tender is actually accepted, the matter must come up for the recommendation of the department concerned. The Tender Board will not act without Ministerial approval. The system has grown up over many years, and is hedged around with many safeguards. Every precaution is taken to see that the best possible prices are obtained. There are so many restrictions and safeguards that it would be almost impossible for anything to get off the track. A secure method exists for dealing with all these matters. I thought it might be better to allow the Main Roads Board to do their own work independently of the Tender Board, but after discussion with Mr. Tindale and his colleagues I agreed that it would be better for the Tender Board to act for them. The machinery is already created in the Tender Board, who have all the necessary organisation and the requisite experience for handling this business.

Mr. Thomson: I presume that tenders are also called by the Tender Board in the Old Country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Agent-General acts for the Tender Board. The board are in communication with the

Old Country with the object of obtaining those materials that are required from that source.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Tender Board call for tenders and make their recommendation. The Minister then approves or disapproves before any action is taken. I am more particularly concerned about the scrutiny of the tenders. The Main Roads Board recently bought large quantities of material. I should like to know whether the lowest tenders were accepted. It is rumoured that one contract might have been let to a local firm at a lower price than was the case with the accepted tender.

The Minister for Works: Not a local firm.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: One hears that these things happen, and I should like some explanation from the Minister. I do not know whether the materials were of the same quality in each case, but there was a tremendous difference between the two prices. There may be a perfectly satisfactory explanation for what happened. I understand that one tender was from a local office and the other was from an outside office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The case referred to by the hon. member was looked into. Tenders were called for two alternative classes of material. Prices were submitted, and in one case the price was lower than in the other. The lower priced tender did not, however, give the full contract, but only a percentage. The result was that the higher tenderer was given a considerable proportion of the work. That was done on the recommendation of the Main Roads Board. Mr. Tindale gave a scientific explanation why he favoured the dearer class of material. This material was bitumen that was obtained from the lakes in its native state. It was not treated or manufactured bitumen. The scientific argument is that it is much more durable and makes a better job than the other material. Mr. Tindale said that while travelling in America he made special inquiries, and satisfied himself that the natural material made for the better and more durable job. In his minute to me he recommended that we should pay the higher figure in order to get the better article. The other people disputed the statement, and said their article was as good as the other, but Mr. Tindale maintained that the former material was cheaper at the price. We have to rely

on the advice of our experts. I am not going to be the Chairman of the Main Roads Board. I do not know anything about the different classes of bitumen. Mr. Tindale is paid to know that. He was sent round the world to gain that knowledge. He told me he had gained considerable experience of road making in America and had studied the treatment under all classes of bitumen. He strongly recommended me to pay the higher figure in order to obtain the better article. It cannot be said that the other firm was a local one. Its material is all imported. Unfortunately none of it as yet is produced in Australia. It all comes from overseas. One office was no more a local office than the other. Though the material used is higher in cost, it is in the long run much cheaper.

Mr. Mann: Have the different materials been tested in this State?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not quite positive, but I think so. This particular material is used in other parts of Australia, and I am fairly confident that it has been used here too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: As the lowest tender has not always been accepted, it is right that there should be some explanation.

Mr. THOMSON: I am somewhat concerned as to the Government's railway construction policy during the current year. There should be an expression of opinion as to whether the proposed expenditure of over £1,500,000 on main roads during the current year is justified, having regard to the financial stringency and to the probable shortage of loan money. I move—

That the item be reduced by £1,000.

The carrying of the amendment would be an indication of the Committee's opinion that part of the money had better be expended in building lines to serve people who have gone outback under the promise of railway communication.

The Minister for Works: The £1,500,000 is not provided here.

Mr. THOMSON: But £40,000 is provided here.

The Minister for Works: That amount will not affect the construction of railways.

Mr. THOMSON: But a principle is involved. The greater proportion of the proposed expenditure on roads will go towards improving facilities that already exist. People who in good faith have settled at con-

siderable distances from the railway system should receive consideration. The matter is of special importance in view of the 3,500 farms scheme.

The Minister for Works: Can we have a railway discussion on this item, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. THOMSON: The question is whether it is wise to approve of the expenditure of £40,000 from revenue on road construction.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member would do better to discuss that question upon a substantive motion. I cannot allow a discussion of railway construction policy on this item.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The reasons given by the member for Katanning will not cause me to vote for the amendment. The £1,500,000 involved is mainly Federal money.

Mr. Thomson: But the State is finding £800,000 odd.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Some £600,000. If that amount is used for railway construction, we shall have to find another £600,000 for road construction. The amendment cannot produce the effect desired.

Mr. MARSHALL: I oppose the amendment, but I wish to sound a note of warning as to road construction. I doubt whether taxpayers generally should be required to continue to bear portion of the cost of constructing main roads. I do not know what was the cost, for instance, of the Belmont road. It is a beautiful road, but the treatment it receives from motor car owners and drivers of motor trucks is scandalous. The users of the roads destroy them.

Mr. Lindsay: Such people should be taxed off the roads.

Mr. Thomson: There should be a speed limit.

Mr. MARSHALL: Last year's estimate was £38,000, and some £22,000 was expended. This year's estimate is £40,000, representing an increase of £17,000 odd on last year's expenditure. That money is to be applied to the maintenance of roads which the users abuse.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member had better address himself to the amendment.

Mr. MARSHALL: I regret I cannot support the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MARSHALL: I fully appreciate that the transportation of commodities, es-

pecially primary products, which have to travel short distances by motor, is a matter of the utmost importance. Rapid transit is essential in order that the commodities may reach the market in fresh condition. I doubt, however, whether the Minister is wise in asking the public to pay for more roads which the users will abuse. As things are, good roads are constructed merely to become a burden on the taxpayer because of the abuse to which they are subjected. In view of the continually increased cost of road maintenance, stricter supervision should be exercised by the traffic authorities, failing which the Minister himself must take a hand and, by more heavily taxing them, teach motorists to regard the enormous expenditure on roads with some degree of sanity. We realise that improved roads are necessary, but in view of the abuse that I have referred to, the Minister would be well advised to take steps to assure that the taxpayers' money is more properly respected.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Murchison has raised a point that should receive attention. The Railway Department lays it down definitely that a certain speed per mile shall not be exceeded over certain lengths of railways. The State is spending large sums of money on the construction of main roads, and heavily loaded motor vehicles are making use of those roads at excessive speeds. I understand that a device to control speeding was submitted to the Traffic Department. By attaching the device to a vehicle the speed would be automatically stopped at a certain point. Recently I travelled along the road referred to by the member for Murchison, behind a truck that must have carried a load of four or five tons. We were in a hurry and endeavoured to pass the truck, but although we travelled at 40 miles per hour, we could not pass it. The roads cannot possibly stand up to that class of traffic. Can the Minister give us any information regarding the device I have mentioned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a lot of truth in the remarks of the member for Murchison, and I know that his charges are not confined to the one road he mentioned.

Mr. Marshall: No, but that one gets a proper grueiling.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A little while ago I travelled along that road, and from Guildford to the showground at Claremont, I followed two lines of tracks that had

scored the surface of the road all the way. Evidently it had been caused by some agricultural implement that had been taken to the show grounds. I have discussed this problem with the officers of the department and the difficulty is that the police attached to the Traffic Department are interested from the point of view of the safety of the public. The preservation of the road does not seem to attract their attention.

Mr. Marshall: Then you will have to take the responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have suggested that in the Bill to amend the Main Roads Act, which I propose to bring down next session if not during the course of this session, we shall make provision for appointing men definitely to look after the traffic from the standpoint of the preservation of the roads.

Mr. Mann: The Police Act refers to danger to the travelling public, not danger to the roads.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Either the Main Roads Board or I have power to appoint inspectors to deal with roads directly under their control.

Mr. Marshall: But they would not have power to prosecute for excessive speed?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, for anything. I do not desire to set up an expensive staff and have one policeman on the road looking after the lives of the public, and another looking after the preservation of the road.

Mr. Thomson: You will have to appoint maintenance gangs on the roads just as they do on the railways.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have maintenance men on long stretches of main roads, and in such instances, I have appointed the man in charge as an inspector and he has just as full power to prosecute as any policeman. This question was discussed by the expert advisers of each State and Commonwealth Minister at our last conference. A report was submitted and was considered by the conference later. It has been referred to the different Governments for consideration. The Premiers' Conference had it before them, and a proposal has gone out to the State Governments favouring the passing of legislation to provide more effective control. We have not done that yet. Not only in the metropolitan area but in the country districts a great deal of damage is done to the roads through the

excessive speed at which heavily loaded vehicles travel. On the Canning-road, it does not matter much what speed is attained by an ordinary motor car.

Hon. G. Taylor: But heavy loads will cut it up.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, it is the heavily-loaded lorries with solid tyres that do the damage. With an ordinary motor car, I do not think a speed of 80 miles an hour would do any more damage on such a road than a speed of 25 miles an hour. The point under discussion has not been lost sight of.

Mr. Thomson: Did you test the device I referred to?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Some time ago I asked a committee to investigate the question of attaching governors to motor vehicles, but they reported that in no country was there a successful device invented to control the speed of motors.

Mr. Thomson: I understood there was a local device that gave great promise.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It has not been brought under my notice.

Mr. Thomson: It was submitted to the department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not heard anything of it. Governors were fixed to the Yellow Cabs with the object of not permitting the cars to travel over 25 miles per hour. The company found that the device did not prove effective, as it could easily be tampered with. If an effective device of that description could be invented, there would be a fortune in it for the inventor, besides which it would be helpful to those who are endeavouring to tackle this problem. Speed limits for various classes of vehicles in different areas have been fixed.

Mr. Marshall: There is no limit on the road I refer to!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Speed traps are set there occasionally and as a result, there has been a long list of convictions.

Mr. MARSHALL: The passing over a bad piece of road or a gully will always slow up a motor car, particularly if it is travelling at high speed. In my opinion, if spoon drains were constructed certain distances apart, they would have the effect of slowing down cars, and decreasing the expenditure necessary for the maintenance of our roads.

Mr. Davy: That could not be done unless the law were amended. Unless that were

done, municipal councils and local authorities would be paying damages all the time.

Mr. Mann: Some might be up for manslaughter.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then we should amend the law. It would be far better to do that than to go on incurring annually increased financial obligations. I offer the suggestion to the Minister's chief engineer. It will do something to prevent motorists from carrying big loads at express speeds.

Mr. MANN: What becomes of the amount received in fines for infringements of the Traffic Act? Does it go into general revenue?

The Minister for Works: If the police take proceedings, the fines go to revenue, but if the local authorities take proceedings the fines go to the local authorities.

Mr. MANN: If the local authority has the responsibility of constructing and maintaining the road they are entitled to the fines, but if the Main Roads Board construct and maintain the road, it is only fair that the fines should go towards the cost of that road.

Item, Swau River, jetties, stone wall, and maintenance of channels, £1,150:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Will the Minister give us some idea as to where this work is to be done? This is a new item, and so there was no expenditure last year.

[Mr. Lambert took the Chair.]

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The item is made up of maintenance of channels in the river, £500, and of jetties in the river £550. The stone wall is to go along the reclamation from Barrack-street. For that, £100 is provided.

Item, Traffic expenses, railways under construction £4,600:

Mr. THOMSON: Under this item last year there was voted £3,000, and the actual expenditure was £7,142. Will the Minister tell us what that £7,142 represented and how the money is to be spent this year? If £7,142 was spent last year, and it is proposed to spend £2,542 less this year, it may be taken as an indication that there is going to be considerable decrease in railway construction.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Two or three of the railways that were in hand last year have been finished, as for instance,

Lake Brown, Bullfinch, and Ejanding Northwards. The Wiluna line, it is hoped, will be finished and, possibly, carrying passengers by Christmas. That, of course, will account for a considerable decrease in this item this year.

Mr. Corboy: Will the plate-laying on the Wiluna line be finished by Christmas?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is hoped that it will be finished by the end of November. Of course we shall not be through with the Pemberton line, 36 miles of heavy country, but we will be through with the Wiluna line, and until we know the railway programme for this year, the Pemberton line will be the only one where there will be any carting.

Mr. CORBOY: Could the Minister give us any indication as to how soon it is proposed to start the construction of the Karlgarin line? The Minister has indicated that the plant at present in use on the Wiluna line will be available by Christmas, and he might tell us what it is proposed to do with that plant.

Item, Buildings, Education Department, £7,150:

Mr. BROWN: I do not know whether the Minister is aware of the deplorable condition of some of our schools in outback centres. I have inspected a few of them recently and found that some of them, wooden buildings, have been constructed of green timber and consequently have opened out in big cracks, while the interiors are in very bad condition. Schools ought to present a bright appearance, instead of which those I have inspected show evidences of neglect. The department now are renting a good many halls for use as schools. Some of those halls are altogether unsuitable for the purpose. Only the other day I inspected one of them, a galvanised iron building not even lined and with no fireplace. Yet 26 children were attending that school, many of them only little tots. Imagine a child that has to walk a considerable distance to school on a winter's morning and then sit in that school with cold, wet feet.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine himself to additions, repairs and maintenance.

Mr. BROWN: I am speaking of repairs that are required.

Mr. Corboy: Have you asked the department to put in a fireplace? I had a similar case, and on applying to the department I

had no difficulty in getting the omission repaired.

Mr. BROWN: This is not a subsidised building, but one erected by the residents themselves. Many schools have been closed, yet the buildings remain where they were erected. The department are constructing an unsuitable type of building; they should have standard portable buildings that could be removed when necessary. I have here a pamphlet, which gives an idea of what some teachers have to put up with. Here is the description of a building, teacher's quarters, consisting of two small rooms only 7ft. 6in. in height, with no bathroom, no shower, no fireplace, no front or back verandah, no washing troughs and no wood shed. Many of the men on the teaching staff are married. Fancy a man having to take his wife to a building like that! No wonder we cannot get teachers to stay any time in our country schools. There should be a much larger vote than this for repairs, with a view to rendering the schools and teachers' quarters more habitable. In my opinion £7,150 is not nearly sufficient. These schools should be renovated more often than they are. The Education Department are not entirely to blame for this, because they make a recommendation to the Works Department and the Works Department shelves it. I have had that experience.

The Minister for Works: Of course you have; so have I.

Mr. BROWN: We have the sympathy of the Minister for Education in a good many of these requests, but we get the same answer every time, namely, that funds are not available, but when they are available the work will be put in hand. When the Education Department agree to renovate a school or shift a school building, they have to apply to the Works Department. Then if the Works Department fail to do their part, the work is not carried out, and children and teachers have to put up with considerable inconvenience. The more money we spend in providing for the education of our children, and the more comfortable we make them and their teachers, the better it will be for Western Australia.

Mr. CORBOY: I really think the Minister might well look into this question of buildings. In my electorate recently quarters were erected for a school teacher. The building was of two little rooms about 11ft. x

9ft., with a poky little kitchen, no front or back verandah and no bathroom.

The Minister for Works: Do they want a bathroom?

Mr. CORBOY: Well, yes, in a place where water is available, and at all events a bathroom should have been provided. I do not know that even a new settler going on to his virgin block would be proud of such a building as his first home. Yet it has been erected by the department as teacher's quarters, and I understand the contract price was £450. Since the building is of wood and iron, something better might have been provided for that sum. If my information about the price is correct, I do not think the department got anything like value for the money. Quite close to this building are splendid police and school quarters which were erected some years ago. They have been vacant for some years and could have been shifted much more cheaply to the site of the new quarters. Instead of that, new quarters have been erected at a price which, on my information, is exorbitant. The old quarters at Marvel Loch and Burbidge are good buildings that could easily have been shifted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us turn the Government out.

Mr. CORBOY: I do not think that is necessary.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do.

Mr. CORBOY: Of course; but in view of the happenings of the last few days, I am surprised that the hon. member should have mentioned it.

Mr. Thomson: You may be in a similar position next year.

Mr. CORBOY: I think we have less reason to be concerned about recent events than have members opposite. The Minister might well inquire into the building costs I have mentioned and into the type of building provided and ascertain whether, as suggested by the member for Pingelly it would not be possible to utilise existing buildings that are unoccupied.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Pingelly has offered a good suggestion which I hope will be noted by the Minister, namely, that in the construction of small schools a portable type should be adopted. The department could design a building capable of being easily erected and dismantled. Unfortunately, it happens in some parts of

the country that there are sufficient children to warrant a school for only a couple of years, and it would mean a considerable saving to the State if we adopted a type of building that could be dismantled by unbolting and removed wherever required.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: In a recent issue of the "Teachers' Journal," considerable space was given to complaints from all parts of the State about the housing of teachers. I wonder if those statements escaped the notice of the Minister. It does not speak well for the Education Department that the teachers should be treated in that way.

The Minister for Works: I have read the whole of those complaints.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Instances were given of other civil servants enjoying a similar status being much better housed. Some of the places, as the member for Yilgarn mentioned, would not be erected as temporary shacks on farms.

Mr. Corboy: I did not say that. I said one would not be very proud of such a building.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It often happens that when a department requests the erection of a new building, the Minister for Works finds that the vote is practically exhausted and there are probably more urgent works to be provided out of the little money available. To obviate that, the Minister for Education should convince the Treasurer that he should provide not £100,000, but £200,000 or £300,000.

Mr. Corboy: How much would the Treasurer have to provide if all the departments convinced him?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That would depend upon the frame of mind of those doing the convincing, as well as the frame of mind of the Treasurer.

Mr. Corboy: You could depend upon the Treasurer's frame of mind.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, like all other Treasurers, he would sit tight. I am afraid we shall not be able to improve on our expenditure this year. In view of the general financial position of the Commonwealth, loan money will not be plentiful.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is due to the Financial Agreement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The question of better schools and quarters was brought under my notice by a deputation of teachers. What appeared in the "Teacher's Journal" was a recapitulation of their statements to me. The buildings they

mentioned were chiefly those built years ago, some of them in the very early days. During the war little improvement, renovation or other work could be undertaken and there has been a lot of leeway to pick up. The class of building is not at all up to modern architectural practice. A committee from the Education Department met officials of the Works Department with whom they agreed on a new design, and I cannot understand the statement of the member for Yilgarn that new quarters had been erected in his district on other than the new design.

Mr. Corboy: I hope the building I referred to is not a sample of the new design.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall investigate the point he has raised that vacant buildings handy to the spot might have been moved there. If what he says is correct, I cannot understand why they were not used.

Mr. Corboy: They are very much better than the place you have built.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Pingelly complained that the Education Department had agreed to proposals and sent them to the Works Department, and that nothing had been done. He seemed to think that the Works Department had fallen down on their job. It would be much more comfortable to proceed with such work than to refuse to carry it out. It is all very well for another department to say that approval has been given for certain work, merely to get rid of a member of Parliament, but the department know full well that the vote has been exhausted. Certain money is voted for work such as police quarters, school, hospitals, etc. When Parliament approves of the vote the different departments are asked to allocate the money and mention the order of preference in which they desire work to be done. When the money is exhausted the work has to cease, but departments continue to approve of work and continue to send on their recommendations. Consequently, all the blame falls on me. Our position would be much happier if there was sufficient money to do all the work required. As regards fireplaces in public halls and schools, the hon. member should make special representations to the department.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Labour, £15,111:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Can the Minister give a rough idea of the number of unions which have cited cases in the Arbitration Court during the year?

Mr. Thomson: It is in the report of the department.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I have not seen the report.

Vote put and declared passed.

Hon. G. Taylor: I wanted an opportunity to deal with the factories section.

The CHAIRMAN: We have finished the whole of the Labour Vote.

This concluded the Estimates of the Minister for Public Works and Labour.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 22nd October, 1929.

	PAGE
Bills: Royal Agricultural Society Act Amendment, 3r.	1056
Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment, 3r.	1056
University of Western Australia Act Amendment, report	1056
Main Roads Act Amendment, 2r.	1056
Dried Fruits Act Continuance, 1r.	1061
Vermula Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	1061
Agricultural Products, Com.	1062
Reserves, 2r., Com.	1063
Transfer of Land Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r., Com.	1067
Road Districts Act Amendment, 2r.	1069

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

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Royal Agricultural Society Act Amendment.

Passed.

2, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

HON J. CORNELL (South) [4.37]: When the Minister replies to the debate I would esteem it a favour if he would inform the House why so much work has been done by the Main Roads Board in the new settlement south of Holleaton and why not one-pennyworth of work has been done in the new settlement north of that locality. For many months all kinds of work has been going on in the former district, but none whatever has been undertaken either by the local road board or the Main Roads Board to serve some 150 men who have taken up locations north of that centre. The Minister might also inform the House whether the work that has been done to the south of Holleaton has been carried out with money derived from the migration scheme, or from revenue belonging to the Main Roads Board. If we can clear up those two points it will please both you, Sir, and I, and remove much misapprehension that has existed for a long time amongst a very deserving section of the community. The Bill makes no provision to alter the existing state of affairs from the point of view of the administration of the Main Roads Board. That board, as we know, consists of an engineer as chairman, another engineer, and an accountant or business man. The select committee which dealt with this question made a valuable recommendation. If members will turn to their report they will find that the committee recommended that the three-member board should be departed from and the administration placed in the hands of one man. I am fully in accord with that view. The alteration should be made without delay, and as much Ministerial control as possible removed. If we want an example of direct control by one man, we have only to look to our own railways, the management of which is vested entirely in the hands of one commissioner. I remember when an endeavour was made