

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 9th October, 1930.

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

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS.

Appointment of Temporary Clerk Assistant.

Mr. SPEAKER: At the last sitting of the House, adverse comment was made by two or three members in regard to the appointment of a temporary clerk. In addition to this comment, I received a letter, couched in courteous language, and signed by 25 members, urging me to appoint the Senior Messenger, Mr. Wilkinson, to the position. Now, in order that the House may have an explanation from me, to which they are justly entitled if they so desire, I wish to place the position clearly and fully before them. On the 6th inst., Mr. Steere, the Clerk Assistant, handed me a medical certificate to the effect that it was absolutely essential for him to have a month's complete rest. I told Mr. Steere, on behalf of hon. members, that I hoped he would be quite restored to health in the interval, and to go away to the hills for his rest, satisfied that he was carrying the very best wishes of every member for a speedy and complete recovery. I then sent for the Clerk of the House to come to my room, and we discussed the position of appointing an official to occupy Mr. Steere's chair.

For the information of the House, and in fairness to me, I will now read a letter which Mr. Grant handed to me this afternoon—

The following is the substance of the recommendations I made to you verbally on hearing that Mr. F. G. Steere was ordered a complete rest for a month:—

In view of the commencement of the busy part of the session, it is necessary for me to have assistance at the Clerk's Table. The precedent in such cases is to borrow an officer from the Public Service or, as in 1908, from the legal profession. I suggested that you should consult the Public Service Commissioner, and with the approval of the Premier, obtain the services of a competent officer for the period named. To your suggestion that the place might be filled by Mr. Wilkinson, I replied that his unfortunate deafness would be a very serious bar to his utility at the Table. I pointed out that even in the early part of the session that deafness had caused some inconvenience, which would be immeasurably greater in dealing with a Bill in Committee, when conference in low tones between both Clerks and the Chairman is absolutely necessary.

To your further suggestion that Mr. Islip might be appointed, I replied that the disadvantage caused by his temporary promotion over the head of his senior would be too great. I further added that, in a busy sitting, there was quite enough work for both messengers in their own duties, especially in the absence of the Sergeant-at-Arms; also that the responsibility for the work at the Table rested on me personally, and that I felt competent to train any willing officer to do what I wanted from him in a week. I submitted that the course suggested would entail less disarrangement of the duties than any other, and that on Mr. Steere's return the normal position would be resumed without difficulty, and that no injury would have been done to anyone.

Acting, as I thought, in the very best interests of the House, and after consultation with the Premier, I telephoned the Public Service Commissioner. Mr. Simpson was asked if he could supply the House with a young man from the service for a month, or possibly six weeks, and after I had explained the nature of the duties required, the answer given me was that he would look round the various Government departments, and endeavour to find a suitable young man for the position. He sent me a Mr. Hawley—I think from the Public Works Department. Mr. Grant is the Clerk of this House, and is responsible to me, on your behalf, for carrying out the duties of his office in a satisfactory manner. I do hope that those members who spoke against my action, and also those who signed the request to re-

move the Acting Clerk, will accept my assurance that I yield to no man in the principle of promotion by seniority—all things being equal. Surely members will not deny me the right, before making this appointment, of being sure that the senior officer was fully capable of performing the duties entailed in a satisfactory manner. Mr. Wilkinson is, undoubtedly, a faithful official, but his unfortunate deafness—and I hope it is only temporary—was so patent to me that I had to pass him over. Mr. Grant's contention regarding the delicacy of putting Mr. Islip into the position gave me much thought and concern before deciding that Mr. Grant's recommendation was sound and reasonable. Should hon. members desire to discuss the matter further, then I welcome it, having nothing to hide, or nothing to fear, but it must be done by a motion under the question of Privilege. I refer hon. members to Standing Order 137. Should any member desire to move further in the matter, he has now the opportunity, and every latitude will be given to him and to the House in dealing with this question.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I accept your kind invitation, Mr. Speaker, to offer a few more remarks.

Mr. SPEAKER: It must be done by means of a motion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I have just read Standing Order 137, which is as follows:—

Any member may rise to speak "To Order," or upon a matter of Privilege suddenly arising.

That Standing Order does not provide that I must necessarily move a motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: I rule that any further discussion on this matter must be as the result of a motion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Would it be in order to frame a motion and discuss it at the next sitting of the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I would not like to attempt to frame such a motion on the spur of the moment.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will accept the hon. member's suggestion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then I shall frame a motion during the sitting.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, METERS.

Mr. PANTON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Referring to my question of the 17th September as to charge for excess water made to a Mr. Dillon, and the Minister's reply that investigations were being made, will he inform the House whether those investigations have been completed? 2, If so, what is the result of the investigations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Refund to Mr. Dillon.

QUESTION—POTATOES, LUCERNE FLEA.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: Will he advise the House as to the trouble due to the alleged presence of lucerne flea in this year's potato crop and what steps have been taken as to export of a portion of this year's crop to New South Wales?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The New South Wales Government gazetted a proclamation which provided that no potatoes, etc., could be imported into that State unless accompanied by a certificate signed by an inspector stating they were grown in districts free from lucerne flea. The department wired to New South Wales asking what was meant by "district" and wrote requesting the acceptance of a statutory declaration from growers that potatoes had been grown in an area free from lucerne flea. The latter was not agreed to, but the proclamation has been amended, permitting importation provided potatoes are accompanied by a certificate signed by an inspector, stating they were not grown on land within a radius of five miles of any land upon which lucerne flea exists.

QUESTION—TRAMWAY, KENSINGTON STREET.

Mr. PANTON (for Mr. Kenneally) asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware of the dangerous condition of the Kensington-street tramway line? 2, When is it intended to relay the line in accordance with the undertaking of the Minister?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The line certainly requires relaying but is not in a dangerous condition. 2, As soon as funds can be made available.

QUESTION—OIL TRANSPORT TANKS.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the Wiluna Gold Mining Company have imported ten 5,000-gal. tanks for oil transport on the State railways? 2, Is he aware that similar tanks could be made within the State at a competitive price? 3, Will he suggest to this and other companies or firms interested in oil transport that should further tanks be required, quotations for supply from within the State should be obtained?

The PREMIER replied: 1, I was not aware of this, but I am now advised that such is the case. 2, No. 3, As a rule the companies seek quotes in such cases locally. The undercarriages for quite a number of tanks for oil companies have been built at the Midland Junction workshops. The Government are desirous of giving the fullest encouragement to local production in such cases.

BILLS (11)—FIRST READING.

1, Agricultural Bank Act Amendment (No. 2).

2, Salaries Tax.

3, Totalisator Duty Act Amendment.

4, Winning Bets Tax.

5, Stamp Act Amendment.

6, Parliamentary Allowances.

7, Land Tax and Income Tax.

Introduced by the Premier.

8, Roads Closure.

9, Metropolitan Market Trust.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

10, Hospital Fund.

Introduced by the Minister for Health.

11, Farmers' Debt Adjustment.

Introduced by the Attorney General.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Traffic Act Amendment.

2, Local Courts Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd October.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.59]: The introduction of this Bill would seem to indicate that there is to be retrenchment of the staff of the Education Department. I suppose that department is feeling the depression, if I may use the word once more, similar to other departments, and may be finds itself unable to keep the whole staff in employment. There are factors that I believe contribute to the lack of employment in the Education Department. The Government have suspended the long service leave for this year, and I understand for this year only, and that will mean that something like 30 fewer teachers will be required. I understand, too, that unfortunately the bad times have affected the marriage market and that a considerable number of the girls who otherwise would be leaving the service and taking up the responsible duties of matrimony will now have to continue in the service. That will account for something like 50 fewer vacancies.

The Minister for Education: About 35.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt the suspension of migration means there is not the same need for the opening of new small country schools, as has been the case for many years. The staff of teachers at the college has been built up to some extent because of the large number of small country schools that have been opened in the group areas. Nearly every group has had its school which has meant supplying more teachers. These had to be trained, and a staff had to be maintained at the college for the purpose. Now that migration has been suspended there will not be the same demand for teachers. Not only will there not be the same number of new country schools opened, but no doubt many of the smaller ones will be closed, because of unemployment and because of the restricted movements of people from one district to another. The department find themselves in the position of having a bigger staff at the college than is required for the efficient working of that institution. In making reductions by way of retrenchment, the Bill introduces a new principle. The measure gives power to the Governor in Council,

which amounts to giving it to the Minister of the day, to declare any officer an excess officer. Instead of such officer being retired, however, because his position has been abolished, it is proposed on the recommendation of the Director, and with the approval of the Minister, to fill a vacancy in some other part of the service by appointing him to it. That in turn would create an excess officer in order to make way for the first one. That excess officer, however, could be transferred to another office in some other part of the service, and so the system would go on until at the end there would be a number of officers who would have to be retired as they would be surplus officers. The object of the Bill, as I understand it, is to enable any officer whose office may be declared excess, to be appointed to another position rather than be retired. This may be done by the Minister on the recommendation of the Director of Education. I should say, if this was thoroughly and properly carried out, it would perhaps result in a greater measure of efficiency in the case of the teaching staff than would be the case if men with high qualifications were retired because there was no more work for them to do, and their offices had been abolished. Rather than do that, it is sound business to find an opening for these officers in some other part of the service. It ought to result in the retention of the better qualified teachers and officers. There might be a man who had risen through the ranks from an "A" grade teacher to the position of inspector. It might then be found there was not sufficient work for him to do, and the office of inspector could be abolished. Instead of retiring him, he could be put back on the teaching staff, either in his old position or another one. That would involve another officer dropping back to make way for him, and so it would go on right down the ladder. This should result in the retention of the best-qualified officers in the service. Nevertheless, it is conferring very great powers upon the Director of Education. It would depend upon the manner in which these powers were exercised whether the proposals worked harmoniously or otherwise. I am not suggesting that Mr. Clubb, the Director of Education, is anything but a fair, just and impartial man. If, however, the Director at the time were possessed of bias, either

social, religious, or political bias, or bias of any other kind, harm might result to officers as a consequence of his recommendations. Personal feelings could creep in so that some officers might be retired who ought to be retained, and others might be retained who fairly and justly ought perhaps to be retired. Although these changes must receive the endorsement of the Minister, the Minister could not know personally the teachers or the officers concerned, or be acquainted with their fitness or qualifications. He could not be in a position to make a selection between one and another to satisfy himself who ought to go and who ought to be retained. He must therefore depend, as the Bill indicates he will depend, upon the recommendations of the Director. So far as I know Mr. Clubb, I do not fear that he will be other than fair, or that he will act other than solely in the interests of the efficiency of the department, or that he will be influenced by any other or outside considerations whatever. Certainly, however, the door is open for an injustice to be done to some officers who could be retained and ought to be retained. I have no doubt that the senior officers who will be retained will be those who have accrued rights. It would be false economy to retire a man in the prime of life who would be entitled to a pension of £300 or £400 a year, and to retain a junior who would be entitled to no pension, unless the latter had qualifications which entitled him to be kept in the service. No doubt the senior man who would be more experienced, had advanced through the service, and held a senior position amongst the higher grades, would be retained. I hope there will not be any exception to that principle. One feature of the Bill is that it is to operate only until the 31st December of next year. Before then we shall have an opportunity to observe how it has been administered and the effect it has had. Generally speaking, I am not opposed to the Bill, and I hope and believe that both the Minister and the Director of Education will do the fair thing under the powers we propose to confer upon them to all the teachers and officers in the service.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [4.58]: I take it the Bill is a declaration of Government policy concerning the methods of adjusting the departments to meet the special needs for rigid economy.

I agree with a great deal of what the Minister has said as to the necessity for this measure. It seems strange, however, that he alone of the Government should bring down special legislation to enable him to retain the senior officers and so reduce down from the top until ultimately it may be necessary to dispense with the least efficient, those who are on the lower rungs of the ladder and have not had the experience of others in higher positions. I quite agree that we should retain in the service of the State those who have had experience and have been educated by the State. We have spent a great deal of money in educating our various public servants to merit promotion. When the time comes for retrenchment we must have regard for the fact that there are officers upon whom there has been a good deal of public expenditure for a number of years, and we should profit by the experience we have gained through the education of those officers. At the same time, I cannot understand why the Minister should bring down a Bill to carry that principle into effect when other Ministers of the same Government are refusing to recognise a principle they have power to enforce under the Public Service Act and the Government Railways Act. Take the Railway Department. Numerous senior officers have been retrenched from that department. I believe nine have had their offices abolished, or else their services have been dispensed with by other means. Several of them had had experience in positions lower in point of salary than those which they were holding at the time of retrenchment. Why should not the Government apply the principle of this Bill to the Railway Department?

Mr. H. W. Mann: Has the Minister any control over the Commissioner of Railways?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes.

Mr. H. W. Mann: In that regard?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. So far as I know, the Minister has absolute control over officers drawing salaries beyond a certain amount. In any case, one would think that the Commissioner of Railways would adopt the Government policy in this respect. It is not customary for servants of the Government to disregard Government policy, and therefore I am of opinion that if the policy were explained to the Commissioner he would observe it. In one case, I under-

stand, there were three relief officers, one of them a senior, another junior to him, and a third junior to the second. The middle officer has been retrenched, the department deciding to carry on with two relief officers. If the Minister for Education were in charge of the Railway Department and carried out the principles of this Bill, he would retrench the least experienced officer, working the principle down in that way, rather than dispense with an officer who has been many years in the service. I consider the method of the Minister for Education to be right, and I want the Minister for Railways to investigate the matter and ascertain whether the policy cannot be extended to protect the officers of his department against possible injustice. Such injustice could be avoided in the Public Service and the Railway Department without such special legislation as the Education Act compels the Minister for Education to obtain. We know that in the Public Service generally there will be retrenchment, and I express the hope that the principles outlined by the Minister for Education will be adopted by other Ministers, the services of the most competent and most experienced officers thus being retained. In the Railway Department, as I have mentioned, the reverse has been the case, and not only in the special instance quoted. In that instance there were three relief officers, and the middle one was retrenched. The Commissioner of Railways has explained that in the matter of retrenchment the most efficient is retained, thus conveying to the general public that the man retrenched is inefficient. However, some of the retrenched officers have been 20 years in the service of the State. It would be wrong to assume that it has taken 20 years to discover that an officer is not suitable for his particular work. I do not think the Commissioner of Railways desires to convey to the public such an impression. The need for economy has forced him to exercise his discretion regarding the retirements to be made. The Commissioner should follow more closely the principles laid down by the Minister for Education. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I see nothing wrong with the Bill. Its principles are sound, and therefore I do not oppose the measure. However, I do hope the Minister for Education will use his influence with his fellow Ministers, so that they may be disposed to do the things that are just.

MR. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [5.22]: Another principle underlying the Bill was mentioned by the Minister for Education in introducing the measure. It is that he does not think the State should be called upon to incur the expense of training young men as teachers when there is no likelihood of positions being available for them upon the completion of their training. The Minister says it is not right to go on training teachers when there is no prospect of scope being found for them in the service. There is the further consideration that the time which youths spend in becoming trained as teachers, say from the age of 16 to 21 years, is the period during which their future is determined. To spend that time of their lives in learning a profession which cannot offer them employment is regarded as a severe handicap to the young men individually, and as a waste from the point of view of the State. These considerations have prompted the Minister to arrive at the decisions embodied in the Bill. To me it seems strange that those principles should be subscribed to by hon. members opposite. We on this side, and particularly those of us who represent the trade unionists of the country, have been denounced time and again for subscribing to those principles and putting them into force. The unions have put up to the Arbitration Court cases for limiting the number of apprentices, and in doing so they have been called upon to establish the percentage of apprentices for whom an industry offers scope. A union puts up to the court the position of the industry, and shows that there are likely to be openings for so many apprentices on completion of their articles. The Arbitration Court examines the evidence submitted, and fixes the percentage of apprentices accordingly. The unions argue that it is useless for a youth to spend the years from 16 to 21 in learning a vocation which will not offer him the opportunity of employment later. Yet that principle has been described as utterly wrong. To-day there are numerous qualified teachers, who have passed through the Training College, out on the labour market because of their inability to obtain appointments. They are in the same position as apprentices who have learnt a trade which offers them no opening. The best time of their lives has been absorbed in studying a profession or trade which has no opening

for them. Here, in this Bill, we have the Government subscribing to a viewpoint which nearly every hon. member sitting opposite has denounced when a trade union has put it up with a view to limiting the number of apprentices. I see not much objection to the Bill, but I echo the opinion of the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that the principle cannot apply without qualification throughout the Public Service. However, it is a sound principle if applied with discretion. I take it that in a great many cases the individual position must be examined. The principle cannot operate without consideration of individual positions. The principle of appointing a man to a lower status is far sounder than that of dispensing with the services of the more experienced men, and retaining the services of the less experienced and less qualified on lower rungs. The method should not be restricted to the Education Department. We know that it is not being used in the Public Service generally, but if it is good for the Education Department it should be good for the service as a whole.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

(Hon. N. Keenan—Nedlands—in reply) [5.26]: Before the question is put, I wish to explain to the House the reason why that which the Bill proposes is limited entirely to the Education Department. The Public Service Act does not, as the member for Guildford-Midland supposes, cover the same ground as this amending Bill covers. Under the Public Service Act the Public Service Commissioner can recommend the Governor to retire certain officers, and if there is a vacancy in the service he can remove a superfluous officer to it. But he cannot create a vacancy for that purpose. This Bill gives the Minister, on the report of the Director, power not only to declare an officer an excess officer, but under certain conditions power to create a vacancy in the department into which to move him. This extreme power would not be justified save by exceptional circumstances. I think I have satisfied the House that exceptional circumstances do exist in the Education Department.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES.*In Committee.*

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Salaries:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is not desired at present that stipendiary magistrates should have irreducible salaries, because in special circumstances it might be deemed wise to let their salaries stand in line with other salaries by being open to reduction. Therefore I move an amendment—

That Subclause 2 be struck out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that it is wise to include in the Bill the salaries of these officers. They might be left to the Governor in Council to fix. It is never done in statutes, except in respect of judges and, perhaps, the Minister for Railways. Some day the Government might find that they have a most excellent person ready to apply for one of these positions, but they will not be able to appoint him because by this very provision they will be limited in the salary they can offer. Rather is it for the Governor in Council to fix such salaries. The acting appointments, of which the Attorney General has spoken so frequently, would not have been continued so long had the previous Government had their way in fixing the salary. I made a suggestion regarding a salary which I thought would be sufficient to induce suitable men to apply, but that salary did not attract any applicants, and so the acting positions were continued. But I think if it were in the hands of the Governor in Council to fix the salary they would do so, and probably with satisfactory results.

The Chief Secretary: What is provided for here is a salary range, not a salary.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and it is a pretty wide range, from £636 to £1,020, and within that range, of course, the Governor in Council has full discretion. The maxi-

mum here provided is higher than the salary now paid to any magistrate.

The Attorney General: Yes, £960 is the highest at present.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And only in recent years has that maximum been fixed. A few years ago it was much lower. Certainly the range £636 to £1,020 gives wide discretion to the Governor in Council, and I should say the maximum will be sufficient to induce suitable qualified men to apply.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not particularly enamoured of the fixing of a limit, but it seemed to me that probably Parliament would want to know what the Government intended, and so the range was fixed to take in the lowest-paid man at present fulfilling the duties; that, with a view to increasing the amount when the financial position improves. I think it wise to have this salary range in the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not press my point.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The most we could hope to afford to pay in the near future is the limit we have put here, and I think it will be wise to leave it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If these magistrates are to be removed from the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commissioner, who is going to determine the actual amount to be paid in salary? The proposal is to take the magistrates right away from the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commissioner, and with this salary range in the Bill it will be necessary to get somebody to determine the actual salary to be paid. I should prefer not to prescribe the salary range in the Bill. I know of no other measure in which it is done. Also, since this distinctly means an appropriation, I rather think the Minister will need a Message.

The Attorney General: We have the necessary Message; it has been received and read in the House.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: At all events, I do not think it wise to have this provision in the measure. The Minister, instead of moving to delete Subclause 2, should move to strike out the whole of the clause.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I could not possibly accept the hon. member's implied proposal that the salaries should be fixed by the Public Service Commissioner. The whole intention of the Bill is to remove the magistrates from the

jurisdiction of the Public Service Commissioner. In the framing of legislation for the appointment of magistrates, judges, and such persons, it is customary to fix the salaries to be paid. Had I been given a free hand, I should have provided the same salary for all magistrates, just as in the case of judges, and I would have put those salaries in the Bill. However, I am not in a position to do that, and so I had to get the legislation framed on the basis that magistrates shall continue, for the time being, to receive the salaries they are now receiving, and merely to fix the salary range, the minimum and the maximum.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Who is to decide the actual salary to be paid?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Governor in Council will do that. For the present, the salaries will remain at what they are now.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Attorney General is setting out in the Bill salaries which ordinarily would be fixed by the appointed authority. And he has such a hazy idea of the value of a magistrate's services that he provides a range of £400 between the minimum and the maximum. He is going to build up a lot of trouble for himself. Because magistrates have a full appreciation of their value, and while the amount of £1,020 stands in an Act, the Attorney General will find a wonderful uniformity of opinion amongst magistrates that their services are well worth that sum. And, since usually magistrates are not youthful, they will decide amongst themselves that they have already reached the age where they should merit the maximum salary. So the Minister is setting up trouble for himself.

The Attorney General: I am not a bit afraid.

Mr. MILLINGTON: And potential applicants will show a disposition to stand off until it is made clear that they are to be appointed at the maximum salary. Even now the Attorney General is not sure within £400 of the value of a magistrate. Then why set it out in an actual clause of the Bill? Alternatively he could get a little closer than the lowest and the highest as the figures indicate in the clause. There is a disadvantage in fixing the amounts so wide apart.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot get much nearer because the minimum put in here—

Mr. Millington: Looks like a guess.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is not a guess, it is the smallest salary being paid to any magistrate. The maximum proposed is approximately £40 more than the existing maximum. It is proposed to make the maximum £1,020. I understand these things run in multiples. If the Leader of the Opposition presses for the deletion of the words, I naturally will pay a great deal of attention to his views. I am willing to agree, but I am doubtful of the wisdom of doing so.

Hon. P. Collier: With the two figures given there will be restriction on the Government of the day, without them there will be no restriction.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Without the figures the Bill will be asking for a blank cheque from the Government of the day.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4—Tenure of office:

Mr. MILLINGTON: I cannot quite understand the inconsistency of the Government. Just recently a Bill was passed to take away certain privileges which have been enjoyed for many years by a section of the Public Service. The Minister for Education gave valid reasons for taking away the privileges that were extended by a previous Act, thereby interfering with the security of tenure which those people considered their right. They have been in the service for years and have grown up in it under the impression that they were secure, and then with one fell swoop the privileges are taken away. Now another section that has not enjoyed it is to be given the privilege of security of tenure. I fall in with the Attorney General's view that we require security of tenure in respect of our jobs and business, but in this world we have to put up a fight for a privilege such as that, and I think the greatest argument against the privilege is that when it applies to a section exception is always taken by those who are outside the pale. The Government should now show cause why on the one hand they are taking away a privilege that has existed for a long time, and on the other hand, setting up a new one. The

Government will have to explain to the teachers their reason for following this course. I should say that the teachers would have good grounds for objecting on finding that the privileges that have been taken from them have been transferred to another section of men who also are serving the public.

The CHAIRMAN: I point out to the hon. member that we are not discussing teachers.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I was merely drawing an analogy between the two. The Government are responsible for both measures and therefore owe an explanation, for on the one hand taking away a privilege from one section and on the other hand extending it to another. The clause provides, amongst other things, that magistrates should hold their offices during good behaviour, but misbehaviour or incapacity are most difficult things to prove. Many men are perfectly well behaved, but it requires something more than good behaviour to hold down an important job such as this. According to the clause, all a magistrate has to do is to be well behaved and his job is secure. Others holding important positions who also are well behaved, and very capable, have to fight for their lives to retain their jobs. Some explanation is required.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member's remarks are a reflection on me because it would appear that I have not succeeded in making him appreciate the position. I am not for one moment concerned with the privileges of people; I do not want to give privileges, and in this Bill I do not desire to confer any particular favour on individuals holding these jobs. I am concerned with their positions and nothing else, and it is because every wise Parliament in the world has held that for the exercise of judicial functions a man ought to have security of tenure if you are to depend on his impartiality that I propose that this Parliament shall do the same thing.

Mr. Willcock: And extend it to this section.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, to this section of judicial persons who in the past have not had it. What concerns me is the impartial administration of justice. This is not a whim of mine. The member for Mt. Hawthorn referred to it as a fetish: I suppose some other hon. member will speak

of it as a foible. This is not a peculiarity of mine; it is the view taken by Parliaments in Australia and in the Old Country for many years, and it is a view gradually being extended in the United States.

Hon. P. Collier: Does it exist in all our States?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot answer that.

Mr. Willcock: Jurisdiction is exercised in a different way in the other States.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, they have different grades. In Western Australia everything that does not go before the Supreme Court has to be dealt with by magistrates. At the present time extremely important questions are dealt with by the magistrates. The Workers' Compensation Act, for instance—claims up to £750—are dealt with by the local court magistrate. At a later stage I may have the opportunity of submitting a measure dealing with the administration of justice by justices of the peace. We are in duty bound to do one of two things, either wipe out these magistrates altogether, or reduce their jurisdiction materially.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, that needs attention. Some would give a boy three months' imprisonment where a £3 fine should be sufficient.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: A man who suddenly finds himself popped on to the bench, never having been there before, is liable to do silly things. But in respect to the clause we are discussing, I intend to resist any attempt to alter it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: While the Attorney General has dealt with the question of principle, I think there is one portion of the clause respecting which he should agree to an amendment that will not affect the principle. Everyone is inclined to consider the value of his work on the basis of a comparison with that undertaken by others. For instance, if one section of the people—the Public Service—are to have their wages and salaries decreased, and they realise that other sections of the community have not suffered correspondingly, the civil servants will be apt to feel aggrieved at the action taken regarding them. Apart from the President of the Arbitration Court, no other section of the service is treated in the way the Attorney General suggests magistrates shall be dealt with. Every other civil ser-

vant has to retire at 60 or 65 years of age, unless an individual officer receives a certificate from, and the recommendation of, the Public Service Commissioner, and the Executive Council endorses the recommendation, which entitles him to be retained in the service from year to year. During the last few months, many men have been retired by the Government because they have reached the retiring age. Magistrates could be dealt with in the same way as individual officers under the Public Service Act have their services continued from year to year, as I have indicated. In the event of an official, over the prescribed age, suffering from incapacity or being guilty of misbehaviour, the Government should have the right to retire him without any bother at all. In other States, it is said, judges have kept themselves in office for years after their period of usefulness has elapsed, merely by not resigning. Senility is a peculiar thing, for while one man of 50 years of age may be senile, another, aged 70, may be comparatively youthful. While many men have years of useful service ahead of them after they reach 65, the usual practice is for them to be retired. It has been recognised that, with regard to officers 65 years of age, it is all a question of judgment as to whether they should, or should not, be retired. The Attorney General suggests that we shall agree to magistrates being appointed to carry on their duties till they are 70 years of age, while between 3,000 and 4,000 other Government employees must be retired at 65 years of age. As regards the President of the Arbitration Court, it is true that provision was made for him to occupy the position until he reached 70 years of age. When that matter was dealt with, it was recognised that judges were appointed for life and the then Government did not think it was desirable to appoint the President under similar conditions. Some age limit, therefore, became necessary, and that was the reason why 70 years of age was introduced into the terms governing that appointment.

The Attorney General: Do you suggest we ought to amend the clause so that the magistrates may carry on after they reach 65 years of age, provided they receive certificates, or the Governor-in-Council agrees to their continuance in office.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes.

The Attorney General: Then that would achieve exactly what I am fighting against. That would mean acting appointments after that age.

Hon. P. Collier: No, not acting appointments.

The Attorney General: Yes, because you would deprive the magistrates of security of tenure after they reached 65 years of age. As long as they are in their positions, I want them to have security of tenure.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Why should they be treated differently from other high officials in the Government service?

The Attorney General: For instance, a magistrate might have to judge between the Government of the day and someone else.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not think it can be said that because a magistrate has not given judgment in favour of the Government, his services have been dispensed with. No such position has arisen, nor do I think it would be likely. I move an amendment—

That in line 8, "seventy" be struck out, and the words "sixty-five" inserted in lieu.

Mr. PARKER: I view the question at issue from another aspect. Lawyers will not apply for magisterial positions if they have to retire at 60 or 65 years of age. Lawyers may be peculiar in that respect, but some seem to be at their best when in the sixties.

Hon. P. Collier: There is hope for some of you yet.

Mr. Panton: And great hopes for the Attorney General.

Mr. PARKER: Formerly, applications have been called for these positions, but suitable men have not come forward. This has been partly because of the question of salary, partly because of insecurity of tenure of office, but also because of the question of retirement at 65, or possibly 60, years of age. If retirement followed at that age, it would mean that a man having years of useful life ahead of him would be quite out of touch with the practice of law. The holding of a magisterial position, although it is a legal post, and the practice of law represent two vastly different walks in life. A person who had to vacate the bench and resume practice at 65, would find it very difficult because he would be out of touch with the practising side of the profession. On the other hand, he might have years of good work ahead of him on the bench.

Mr. Panton: But he might be old and crotchety.

Mr. PARKER: And, I admit, may keep some members of the profession in their place. For my own part, I much prefer to appear before a man having years of experience, because magistrates become more patient as they get older.

The Attorney General: They mellow with age.

Mr. PARKER: The extra five years, being the difference between 65 and 70, represents quite a lot, and is equivalent to a large increase in salary. For that reason, I think the age fixed should be not less than 70. I also agree with the Attorney General when he says that security of tenure must be retained to magistrates up to the very last. Their position should not be in the balance after they reach 65. The question of good behaviour is, after all, a formal matter, as that would suggest what is almost an impossibility regarding men appointed to the Bench. If a man suffered from senile decay, he could be removed under the provisions of some other Act altogether.

Mr. Willcock: He could not be removed in that way.

Mr. PARKER: Decidedly, under the Lunacy Act.

Hon. P. Collier: We would require 20 more lunatic asylums if everyone were to be dealt with on that basis.

Mr. PARKER: If hon. members were to search the records, they would find that many persons have been appointed to look after estates of individuals who have not been declared lunatics but have been, nevertheless, set aside. Of course, the peculiar thing is that lawyers do not suffer from senile decay!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The clause provides for differential treatment. We have highly qualified public men who are subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act and are compulsorily retired when they reach 65 years of age.

The Attorney General: The point is that those officers can be retired but their services are still retained, whereas magistrates must go on until they reach a certain age.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Bill will make magistrates subject to special conditions. We have already gone far enough without limiting the power of the Government regarding the retiring age.

The Attorney General: You do not object to that regarding judges, because they are there for life.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.50 p.m.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: In the Public Service there are numerous highly-trained professional men liable to be retired at the age of 65 years. Why should there be any difference in the case of magistrates? The argument of the member for North-East Fremantle applies to other professions besides that of the lawyer. For example, an inspector of police retires at 65, and then, even if fit and well, would have great difficulty in adapting himself to another avocation. The same thing applies to engineers, who are retired at 65. Something special should not be enacted for the benefit of the lawyer who is created a magistrate. The Government to-day use the 65-year limit to retire professional men who are still perfectly vigorous.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If my scheme is put into operation, magistrates will not be placed on the same footing as other civil servants. No magistrate is to be at the mercy of any Government. I do not wish to suggest that any Western Australian Government ever got rid of a magistrate because he happened to displease them. In the clause I am dealing with a matter of principle, and with what might happen under any Government of this State. To follow out what is done in the Supreme Court to its logical conclusion, magistrates would have to be appointed for life. I do not propose to adopt any such course. We cannot afford to pay pensions to magistrates; and consequently magistrates, if appointed for life, might feel tempted to remain on the bench longer than was desirable, whereas a judge can retire on a pension. Therefore a definite retiring age should be fixed for magistrates. A man does not necessarily, or even probably, cease to be able to perform his functions on reaching the age of 65. Most men whose work requires the exercise of intellectual rather than of physical activities are just as good at 65, or even at 70, as they were at 45. A magistrate is not in the hurly-burly of life; he is at his work without disturbance or anxiety, except the anxiety to do his job well. I have fixed the age of 70 without

regard to any other law. Hon. members opposite object to this on the ground, apparently, that public servants can be called upon to retire at 65, even although they may be, and in many cases are, retained by the Government after reaching that age. Members of the Public Service will be sufficiently intelligent to recognise that the position of a magistrate is quite different from that of, say, an engineer. The engineer has to carry out instructions, and is not called upon to hold the balance between citizens or between a citizen and the Government. Thus there is no reason why the engineer's position should be one of complete independence. Indeed, we do not desire an engineer to be independent; we desire him to carry out the orders of the Government. But a magistrate is there to administer the law as it is made by Parliament, to do right without regard to the desires of the Government or anyone else. Therefore a magistrate should have complete independence. He should not be capable of being affected in his position because he has displeased the Government or anybody else. If hon. members think 70 years too late an age, I will listen to their alternative proposals with respect. I desire that when a magistrate reaches the retiring age, whatever it may be, that is fixed by Parliament, he must retire, and that no Government shall be able to retain his services for two minutes thereafter. I ask the Committee not to reduce the age from 70 to 65 for any reason other than that they consider that a man who has reached the age of 65 years is no longer capable of discharging magisterial functions.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	19
				—
Majority against	..			6
				—

AYES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Withers
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Panton
Mr. Millington	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Barnard	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Parker
Mr. Davy	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Doney	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Keenan	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Wells
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. North
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Miss Holman	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Corboy	Mr. J. I. Mann
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Troy	Mr. Angelo
Mr. Walker	Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Wilson	Mr. J. H. Smith

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Qualifications for appointment:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not desire to place the Government in the position of not being able to appoint any gentleman who is at present carrying out the duties of a stipendiary magistrate. Quite a number of them are not qualified under paragraphs (a) or (b) of this clause. I do not propose to mention them by name, but as I wish the Government to be in a position to appoint any of them, I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—“(c) his name appears under the heading ‘Stipendiary Magistracy’ on pages 74, 75, or 76 of the Public Service List, 1930.”

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—Public Service Act not to apply.

Mr. WILLCOCK: How is it proposed to deal with these cases? The Attorney General does not want a stipendiary magistrate to be in any way under the direction of the Government; yet the Minister, if he has had much experience of the Public Service, will know that sometimes great inconvenience is caused to an officer who may be transferred from one place to another. How are transfers of magistrates to be made, if not made by the Public Service Commissioner? The question of salary is involved in these transfers, for in one district the

work may be of far greater importance than in another, and so the salary will not be the same in both. For instance, the work in an outback district would not be nearly so important as that in the Local Court, Perth. Consequently the Perth magistrate should receive greater remuneration than a magistrate in an outlying district. If the Attorney General does not desire to have any control over magistrates, then somebody else must have the duty of transferring magistrates from one centre to another. What are the Attorney General's intentions in this respect? The Minister will see that, unless these transfers are made equitably, some hardship might be imposed on an unfortunate magistrate.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not expect there will be any great difficulty. As a matter of fact, in the past the Public Service Commissioner has had nothing to do with the transferring of magistrates, except by passing on to the Executive Council a recommendation which, in point of fact, he has received from the Under Secretary for Law. The Public Service Commissioner has always endorsed recommendations from the Crown Law Department.

Mr. Willcock: But the recommendations have been made in collaboration with the Public Service Commissioner.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not find any evidence of such collaboration. The Public Service Commissioner would never question the recommendations of the Crown Law Department. There will not be the slightest difficulty. It is true that a Government, if they could be so mean, might impose hardship upon a magistrate by transferring him from a busy centre to an outlying district. Even so, that would be a small thing as compared with being able to dismiss him. I am hoping that when this measure has been in operation for a few years we shall be in a position to pay all magistrates, whatever their specific duties, the same salary.

Mr. Willcock: That would not be right.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think it would be ideal.

Mr. Willcock: It would have to be applied to everybody, engineers and all.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; engineers are by no means in the same category with magistrates. The principle underlying the Bill is that magistrates are in

an entirely different category from that of other public servants.

Mr. Willcock: The principle underlying the Bill is that the Government will have no control over them.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not regard it as condemnatory of the whole Bill that I have not been able to go as far as I would like. I have gone 80 per cent. of the way, and if I occupy my position long enough, and if the finances improve, I will go the full 100 per cent.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8—Magistrates not to be appointed except under this Act:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have to admit that I do not quite see the necessity for the proviso to this clause. I do not think the Bill will in any way affect the right of the Governor to appoint wardens or coroners. I do not like to have in the Bill anything that is not necessary, and so I move an amendment—

That the proviso be struck out.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I think the proviso is there because in mining districts wardens invariably act as magistrates, and unless by some means we are to give the wardens magisterial power to deal with matters outside the scope of the Mining Act, we shall not be able to make use of them as magistrates. Alternatively, we will have to exempt by proclamation the goldfields from the incidence of this measure.

The Attorney General: We do not intend to exempt by proclamation, but only to extend by proclamation.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Does that mean that this measure is not intended to apply to goldfields where wardens are appointed?

The Attorney General: It might be extended to Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We would not want a warden and a magistrate both in one outlying district. I take it this measure will apply only to what we know as the South-West district of Western Australia, say from Northam southwards.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is intended to extend this measure to all those parts of the State where we can appoint qualified persons as magistrates. We cannot appoint one to Esperance, for instance, because there we have to appoint a combined

doctor and magistrate, and so we cannot require in him full qualifications as a magistrate. I want this proviso to be the law, but I do not think it necessary to have it in this Bill. I do not want to interfere with the right of the Governor to appoint wardens, or to establish wardens' courts under the Mining Act. This measure, without the proviso, will not set up any such interference. What will happen is this: If, under this measure, we were to appoint a stipendiary magistrate for, say, Pilhara, the Governor, exercising his powers under the Mining Act, would appoint that person warden also.

Mr. Lamond: He has that appointment now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, but it is not probable that we shall extend the operation of the measure to that district, because the Pilhara man is not qualified to be a stipendiary magistrate. If we did extend the measure, and made an appointment, the Governor would appoint him under the Mining Act as warden. A warden under the Mining Act has amazing powers in many directions and exercises a jurisdiction quite unlike that of a magistrate anywhere else.

Mr. Willcock: He is a most responsible person.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Most responsible. I consider the proviso entirely unnecessary.

Mr. WILLCOCK: To what parts of the State is it intended to extend the measure? If it be extended to the goldfields, there will be no possibility of anyone being appointed a warden unless he possesses legal qualifications or passes the examination.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If that is how the hon. member feels about it I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Preservation of jurisdiction, authority, and rights of existing magistrates:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause 2 the words "or person" be struck out.

The words are unnecessary.

Amendment put and passed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Consequential on that I move an amendment—

That after "or" in line 1 of Subclause 3 the words "any other" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed: the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 11—Temporary appointments:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has been pointed out that in certain circumstances it would be almost imperative to appoint someone to hold a position for a short period. At first I scouted the idea, but I realise that the necessity might arise. A magistrate might die and, if the Governor appointed a solicitor, some little time might elapse before he could take up his duties. I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as Subclause 2:—"(2) In the case of a vacancy occurring through the death or retirement of a stipendiary magistrate, the Governor may appoint any person to fill the vacancy during such time, not to exceed two months, as may be necessary for the appointment of his successor."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 12—Magistrates not to practise or sit in Parliament or act as paid arbitrators:

Mr. WILLCOCK: In industrial disputes, it has been found desirable, when the parties could not get before the Arbitration Court, to select a magistrate as arbitrator, and generally some fee has been paid. This clause would debar a magistrate from so acting?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The resident magistrate at Bunbury (Mr. Crockett) is chairman of the Railway Officers Classification Board.

The Attorney General: But I do not think he gets paid for it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He does.

The Attorney General: I do not think he should.

Mr. WILLCOCK. In cases of that kind it would be impossible to get a magistrate to act, because he would be violating this provision.

The Attorney General: The Government might allow his services to be used.

Mr. WILLCOCK: And give him an allowance? This provision would debar him from acting.

The Attorney General: Not from acting, but from receiving payment.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If he were not paid, he would not be likely to rush the job.

The Attorney General: Judges of the Supreme Court frequently act as Royal Commissioners and are not specially paid for it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is a different matter. Previous to the present Arbitration Act, it was often necessary, in order to avoid delay, to appoint someone to act as arbitrator or as chairman of a committee to whom a dispute could be referred. Mr. Canning acted on several occasions.

The Attorney General: Was he paid?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes.

The Attorney General: By whom?

Mr. WILLCOCK: By the Government I think. At any rate he was paid by someone.

Mr. Millington: Yes, when acting in the tramways case.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Magistrates who possess the confidence and respect of the parties should be able to act when desired. On many occasions their services have been requested by both parties. The labourer is worthy of his hire. Such an arbitrator should not be debarred from receiving payment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It would be quite impossible for a magistrate to act as arbitrator in a matter of any importance and also carry on his duties. He would have to be seconded from his duties.

Mr. Willcock: Mr. Crockett acts as chairman of the Railway Officers Classification Board, which duties occupy three or four weeks of his time.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: This is not intended to prevent a magistrate from acting in that capacity. Judges and magistrates should be available for duties such as have been mentioned. It is intended to prevent a magistrate from acting as arbitrator in a private dispute.

Mr. Willcock: The Minister for Railways could tell us whether Mr. Crockett is paid out of the railway vote.

The Minister for Railways: He is.

Mr. Marshall: Would this clause affect those appointed as industrial magistrates under the Arbitration Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; they would be merely carrying out magistrates' duties. I will accept the suggestion of the member for Geraldton.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I move an amendment—

That all the words after "solicitor" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 13—agreed to.

Clause 14—Regulations:

Mr. MARSHALL: Ever since the Attorney General has been a member of this House, in season and out of season, he has attacked every Bill that has contained a clause similar to this. In the very first measure he introduces, as a Minister of the Crown, he allows that principle to be embodied. He has been ferocious in his attacks upon the principle of giving the Government the right to legislate by regulation, but now he wants to do the very same thing himself. If he is consistent, he must agree with me that the clause should be struck out. Apparently, however, he desires to sneak the clause through quietly although he admitted the other evening he did not know it was in the Bill. I am not altogether opposed to the idea of giving Governments the right to make regulations. Many Bills must contain that power if the machinery for their operation is to run smoothly. It would be impossible, for instance, to administer the Traffic Act without the existence of regulations. When I said the other night the Governor carried out duties that were not very laborious, I overlooked the fact that he was sometimes called upon to make these regulations. In order to relieve him of much of his strenuous work as Governor, I will vote against this clause.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I, too, have heard the Attorney General talk of the danger of government by regulation. When I sat on the other side of the House I used to think there was not much danger in giving that power to any Government, but now I take a different view. We have had a bitter experience of certain regulations that were framed under the Traffic Act. No one knows how they slipped through, but there they are, and prosecutions have been launched under them. No one seems to have known that they were framed. At any rate, there is no need for the right to make regulations to exist in the case of a Bill of this kind. If we strike out the clause, the Governor will be relieved of some of his strenuous duties. That may also mean it will be possible to abolish the office for the

time being, and allow the Chief Justice to carry out the social duties.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I agree to the excision of the clause. It is quite unnecessary in a Bill of this nature, and I thank the member for Murchison and the member for Fremantle for calling my attention to that fact. At the same time, I think that any impartial listener to my protests against the powers to make regulations will agree that I did not oppose all such powers.

Mr. Marshall: You had very few reservations.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In many measures the power to make regulations, if properly defined, is necessary. In this case I cannot imagine that any such necessity exists.

Clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1930-31.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 7th October; Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

Vote—Public Utilities: Aborigines Native Stations, £6,172:

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I was present at the last sitting of the Committee when we were dealing with the Estimates, but I was obliged to leave before the sitting was over. I now find that the vote for the Agricultural Department, upon which I desired to speak, has been passed.

The CHAIRMAN: We cannot go back upon that.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, but it is a most extraordinary procedure. All I can say at the moment is that I am disappointed that Parliament should allow such a thing to occur.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member would have had the opportunity to speak had he been in the Chamber.

The Minister for Railways: Why not have a go at the Aborigines vote.

Mr. MARSHALL: I understood we were dealing with public utilities, but no Minister seems to be in charge to bring down these particular Estimates. There seems to be a desire on the part of members of the

Government to be as silent as possible on these occasions. That is not fair to members. It is the first time since I have sat in this Chamber that the Estimates have been slipped through like this without Ministers being in their places to explain the various votes.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is but a small vote. Surely the hon. member does not expect me to address the Committee at length on the aborigines question! When we come to deal with the vote for the Chief Secretary's Department, I shall be only too delighted to explain anything that members desire I should explain, but I cannot be expected to address the Committee on such a small vote as this.

Item, Book-keeper, £195:

Mr. COVERLEY: Will the Minister explain why £195 has been provided under this heading?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is merely for temporary labour which may mean an amount of £195 for this year only. There is no diminution in the expenditure for the regular hands.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Goldfields Water Supply Undertaking, £135,100; Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, £2,681; Metropolitan Abattoirs and Saleyards, £29,181; Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, £136,323; Other Hydraulic Undertakings, £23,022; Perth City Markets, £850—agreed to.

Department of Minister for Railways, Tramways and Electricity Supply (Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister).

Vote—Railways, Tramways and Electricity Supply, £3,514,000:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands) [8.34]: I did not expect that the Railway, Tramway and Electricity Supply Vote would be passed without discussion, and I had not the slightest intention of offending the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) by not following the usual practice of introducing the Estimates of such a large department. I realise that the operations of the railways, tramways and electricity supply have a very great bearing on the financial position

of the State. Hon. members, if they take the trouble to look up the actual figures, will realise that the total estimated expenditure for the three departments is over £4,500,000, including interest on the capital cost. The estimated expenditure, apart from interest, amounts to over £3,500,000, and, therefore, as I have already indicated, this department has a great bearing on the financial position generally. I wish to refer specially to the railways for the reason that, at the moment, we are compelled by conditions obtaining in the State, particularly in the southern portions, to make a serious reduction in the strength of the staff, and also to curtail expenditure. Sometimes we are prone to think—and I know members of the House are continually making assertions that improvements could be effected—that the position of the railways would be much improved if they were better administered. I agree entirely with that contention. The same applies to every other department under the Government. It is one thing to merely make such an assertion, and another to indicate how the department could be better administered.

Mr. Munsie: You will get any number of people who will tell you that they could do it.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : Yes, I know that, but notwithstanding all the criticism, I have yet to hear how it could be done. When we were in the throes of the war, I heard greater military experts than Kitchener, French or Haig at the street corners of Perth. So, too, I have heard exactly the same type of criticism regarding our railways. I have not yet found the individual who could, by constructive criticism, show how our railway system could be better administered. There is too often a desire on the part, not only of the public but of hon. members too, to make a comparison between the railways as a transport facility with other means of transport. Those who indulge in such a comparison lose sight of the fact that our railways have not been established entirely for the purpose of earning revenue. They have been established in order to assist the development of the State. In years gone by we have deliberately, and, may I say, wilfully, interfered with the operations of the railway service by giving instructions to the Commissioner to undertake operating losses for the purpose of assisting and

maintaining the development of our industries. Members will realise that in a State, the population of which is 417,000 souls, men, women and children, having 4,111 miles of railways in operation, it cannot be expected that such a small population, irrespective of how high may be their individual earnings, will make such a system pay working expenses and interest on the capital outlay. There are certain parts of our railway system that must be carried on at a loss, and it is necessary that that should be so in the interests of industry and the development of the State as a whole. The main purpose of our railways is developmental. The railways assist by the provision of favourable freight rates for both the primary and secondary industries. Our main competitor on the roads—motor transport—caters for the public from the point of view of profit-making in respect of their individual efforts. It is true they could not afford to operate a motor transport system, either by a company or by an individual, at a loss. People interested in those activities are not expected, as such, to assist in the development of the country at their own expense. It is expected of the State only that such a position shall obtain. It is expected that the State, on behalf of the community as a whole, shall do so in the interests of the development of industry. In these circumstances, when making comparisons, we must bear in mind the fact that the railways represent a community-owned utility run in the interests of the whole community with a knowledge that certain losses must be borne on behalf of the community as a whole, while motor transport is run for the benefit of those directly concerned. We have deliberately insisted that there shall be special concessions granted to certain persons in the community. We do not insist that similar concessions should be provided by the privately-owned competition. We grant concessions and reduced fares to school children, to apprentices, to students attending the University, nurses, and others. The tramways provide cheap fares for school children and workers, whereas the only concession of which I am aware that the buses, which include the taxis as well, grant is to children under 12 years of age, and then the concession is to a limited degree only. It is true there are occasions when the tramways are very seriously abused because at

times of peak loading, they do overload, comparatively speaking, the tram cars. At the same time there is not nearly so much danger in overloading a tram car as there is in overloading any form of motor transport. On the other hand, the buses are overloaded as well.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Then prosecute them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We could not possibly keep the army of inspectors that would be necessary to enable us to detect all instances of overloading. When overloaded, the effect is that the proprietors of the buses rob the State of the license fee they should pay, but, in addition, do extra damage to the road that must be maintained at the expense of the general community, who are the owners of the road and must face any consequent losses.

Mr. Marshall: Yes, there is the great amount of damage they do to the roads, and increased maintenance costs.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is what I am pointing out. Overloading buses makes the cost of road maintenance all the greater, and that extra cost must fall on the general community. As to the railway system, the people have invested a huge sum of money and that involves the payment of large sums as interest. The community has to suffer any losses from the workings of the railways, which are of such importance in the development of our industries. The assistance rendered by the railways must be judged on an analysis of our goods and livestock earnings. These show that out of a total of 362,032,402 ton miles hauled, the average return was 1.67d. per ton mile, and 61 per cent. of the traffic carried returned less than the average earnings. Moreover, 85 per cent. was carried for less than 2d. per ton mile. About 8 per cent. only of the department's traffic actually attracted the competition of motor traction, and even then only for comparatively short distances, and to places that owe their existence to the provision of railway facilities.

Mr. Withers: And they went for the first class traffic.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know that; I was coming to that point. As the member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) has pointed out, the 8 per cent. of the railway traffic that attracted competition by the motor trucks was represented by high-

paying freight. The railways had been charging high freights on wool because at that time wool was well able to bear the freight charge. As soon as the price of wool began to fall, and even before that time, road competition became pretty keen for the carriage of wool. Many farmers who, besides being wheat growers, produced a quantity of wool as well, turned from the railways in connection with the carriage of their wool because they could get it transported slightly more cheaply by road. Those farmers forgot that they were only able to establish themselves on their farms because the community, in the first instance, found the capital necessary to construct the line, and suffered losses in the early operations of the railway, to enable the farmers to develop their holdings. When the time arrived that enabled those farmers to benefit by a little deduction in the actual cost of transport, they turned from the railways and had their wool conveyed to market by road. Those farmers did not take into consideration the fact, nor did the motor transport seek to avail themselves of the freight available, that the railways were carrying their fertilisers and wheat at a cheap rate. That, in my opinion, represents unfair competition. It is competition that the community should say should not be allowed to exist, and should be removed at any cost.

Mr. Raphael: Have you not done that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. Raphael: You have practically done so.

Mr. Munsie: The regulations that apply in Victoria will remove it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will come to that point, too. I have had a few years' experience in the administration of the Railway Department, and I know something about unfair competition. I have returned to take charge of that department only to learn that unfair competition has grown to such an extent that to-day it is viewed from the standpoint of vested interests. There are some hon. members who say the Government are not entitled to take action that will remove that competition entirely, because those concerned have interests that have been built up. They suggest that action taken will mean robbing those people of their vested interests. Are we

to lose sight of the fact that the taxpayers of the State have vested interests in our railway system? Are we to lose sight of the fact that on the capital cost of their outlay the people generally have to pay about £1,000,000 in interest? Are we to say that because vested interests have been allowed to grow up we should not take action in the interests of the people? I have always held that when a decision is finally arrived at as affecting all the community, it is the interests of the many that should be considered, not those of the few. In dealing with the motor competition that has grown up and which is unfair, we must realise that that competition ought to be removed even though in the removing of it some few will be hard hit. The position is to-day made more serious because of the existing financial difficulties. We are now told that we must live within our means. There was a time when we could have used trust funds or borrowed money to make up any shortage in the railway earnings. To-day we are told we can spend only that which we have. Are we going to say, therefore, that we will suffer the continuance of inconvenience to thousands so that we may extend special consideration to the few? Unfortunately I am in the position to-day of having to dispense with the services of really good, hard-working men, many of whom have made railway work their life's undertaking. To-day their future is gone. The member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) will appreciate the fact that many of the men in the railway service joined as boys in the capacity of cadets, and have grown up with the system. They have continued in the belief that with the growth of the system they would remain with it and benefit accordingly. They have rendered good service over a period of years. To-day they are cast on the scrap heap, practically of no value. That is a vested interest which apparently does not count! Pounds, shillings and pence count, but a man's task for life can be cast aside because a few people make a bigger noise than probably they are entitled to make. I wish members to know that the Commissioner of Railways has received from the Government only one instruction on this matter—that he, like other heads of departments, must make his expenditure coincide more closely with his revenue. The position is not as it used to be.

Mr. Willcock: In view of your opening remarks, that does not seem a perfectly logical attitude.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. I definitely admit that the hon. member is justified in making that interjection. The Government now have to adopt an entirely different attitude. Formerly, when in consultation with Colonel Pope, I pointed out to him that rather than get rid of men in the railway service we should spend loan moneys for the purpose of increasing the facilities available for the public, that we should wherever possible make improvement and grant additional conveniences rather than decrease the service rendered to the community. To-day, however, I am not able to do that. I cannot ask the Treasurer for loan money any more than I can ask him for revenue. Unfortunately, to-day many of the men in our shops who have become trained and skilful workmen, even to the extent of constructing locomotives, are being retrenched. When the locomotives now under construction have been completed, all the expensive plant acquired for the purpose of construction will be idle, and the men will be thrown out of work, until things improve. If I could have obtained, as I obtained formerly, loan funds for the purpose of carrying on, there would be no need to put these men off. But one cannot get blood from a stone, and under existing conditions I cannot get money from the Treasurer, simply because it is not available. We are doing our best under difficult circumstances, though there may be differences of opinion as to the methods employed. The Commissioner of Railways has had no directions as to how he shall proceed in reducing staff. I get letters almost every day—I suppose hon. members in general receive such letters—from people who feel that they have been badly done by. Such a letter is apt to say that the writer was the only man in the shop who worked, and that all those kept on are loafers not worth twopence an hour. Would hon. members suggest that I should interest myself in matters that are definitely given by the Railways Act to the Commissioner to be decided? Up to a certain point of payment the Commissioner can discharge men without Ministerial sanction. I have declined—and consider that I have rightly declined—to interfere with the Commissioner in the discharge of his duties.

If I could do the job better than the Commissioner can, I would not be accepting a Ministerial salary; I would have applied for the position long ago. Let me be modest and candid, and say I cannot do the job as well as the Commissioner can. The last report of the Railway Department gives some interesting figures as to the operation of the system. Last year's train mileage was 5,898,000, and the earnings were £3,659,000. The mileage was slightly smaller and the earnings were slightly less than those of the previous year. Working expenses amounted to £3,112,000 last year as against £3,055,000 for the previous year. Working expenses were increased to run a lesser train mileage and to earn a smaller revenue. The total number of men employed by the department at the 30th June last was 9,011, but the average number of men employed for the last financial year was 9,660, as against 9,630 for the previous financial year. Again, there is an increase in the number of employees for a lesser train mileage and a smaller revenue. That position could not continue indefinitely. In justice to the Commissioner may I say that he was not entirely responsible for the position. At one period there was a keen desire on the part of the wheat agents to get the wheat in pretty early. Having discussed the matter with the agents, the Commissioner agreed to carry a certain tonnage per week. He proceeded on those lines, with the result that he had to increase his staff abnormally. He had to run trains which involved additional operating costs in the way of overtime and allowances. Then suddenly he was told by the agents—I suppose because of the fall in the market price of wheat—that they would cut him off. They practically ceased operations. The result was that the extra cost incurred did not justify the action which the Commissioner was induced to take. I do not think he will be caught the same way again.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Does your statement refer also to the wheat pool?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It probably does. The ex-Minister for Railways will be able to say definitely.

Mr. Willcock: Wheat consignments suddenly dropped from 350,000 bags to about 150,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That could not happen without the wheat

pool being in it. Having mentioned those facts, may I again urge hon. members to take if not a charitable yet a reasonable view of the conditions to be faced. I do not think any member will for a moment suggest that we are entitled even under normal conditions, much less under abnormal conditions such as those of the moment, to keep any Government department over-staffed. There is no advantage to anybody from doing it. The Government realise that it is most undesirable to dispense with the services of men who have honestly set out to make the avocation their lifework. However, exactly the same thing applies in all other forms of business. Many men who have been forced out of private employment were just as earnest as even the men employed in the Railway Department. But it is most unfortunate that such a position should have arisen owing not entirely to the present time of stress, but owing in part to the growth of competition of a nature which I have already described as unfair. To me that is the sorriest feature of the situation. I regret it exceedingly when I see men, and particularly young men who have set out in the department as boys and have grown up with the idea of making railway work their life-work, suddenly thrown out, practically unfit for any other employment. In the circumstances I am sure members will agree that we ought to do anything in reason to bring back to the Railway Department the traffic which the department ought to have and ought never to have lost. The member for Albany (Mr. Wansbrough) said that some States had already taken a strong stand in this matter. The Victorian Railways Commissioner, for example, has power to make penalty rates for persons and firms who use the railway system for part of their goods and the roads for the carriage of the balance. That is to say, where persons or firms use the railway system where it suits them and transfer the balance of their goods to road transport, the Commissioner imposes penalty rates upon the goods railed by such persons and firms. I do not know that we should go to that extent, but if we continue to lose traffic we shall have to consider whether this State would not be justified in adopting a similar attitude.

Mr. Lamond: It has been adopted in the past on Western Australian branch railways.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. The Commissioner of Railways is a common carrier, and therefore cannot impose differential rates.

Mr. Lamond: It was done in the case of wool, which if carried by rail paid a lesser rate over the Port Hedland jetty than if carried by motor.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have nothing to do with the jetty. The Commissioner controls the jetty, but he is not affected as a carrier of goods. Has the hon. member any complaint to make about the adoption of that attitude?

Mr. Lamond: No. I think it is the correct thing.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner could not adopt that attitude on the railway system generally. He has not the power. Whether he shall have that power will probably have to be considered ere long. In justice to the community we cannot allow things to continue as they are. The department's gross revenue for the current financial year is estimated at £3,990,000, and it is anticipated that the expenditure will be kept down to the amount shown, £3,020,000. Thus the net revenue estimated is about £970,000. The interest charges on the railways, which charges must be met by the Treasury, will amount to £980,000. Therefore this year we are budgeting for a loss on the railway system of £10,000, as against last year's loss of something over £400,000.

Mr. Wansbrough: Will there not be some alterations, as regards the port-to-port rate for instance?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The port-to-port rate is gone, and I hope it will never come back again. That is one of the directions in which we hope to effect a saving in order to achieve what we have budgeted for. I have never been very favourable to the port-to-port rate. I think we can do very well without it. Sometimes doubt is expressed as to whether the department will be able to do what is forecasted. It is urged that our revenue will not reach the amount estimated. It may not, but in that case our expenditure must not reach the amount that is shown. We must watch our position closely enough to be able to ensure that at least something like an approach shall be made on the 30th June next to the difference shown between earnings and expenditure. While we have dispensed with

the services of a great number of men we have not yet experienced the trading advantage from those retrenchments because of the payment of long-service leave. Long-service leave in effect means payment of wages until a certain period has expired after retrenchment. The trading advantage of many retirements will not be felt until November, and in some cases not until December. The men retired are actually in idleness, but are still being paid. Some people hold strange ideas regarding the payment of long-service leave. They forget that long-service leave is supposed to be a recreation leave granted to enable a person to come back fit and well after a period of years spent on work in one direction only. Now it has been made a kind of payment in a lump sum for services rendered. Quite recently I had the spectacle of a man who was paid off with the sum of £62 for long service leave and who within a fortnight was seeking sustenance. That £62 was actually his wages paid in advance. Until the £62 was expended he was in no worse a position than if he had remained in work, yet within a fortnight of his services being dispensed with he was seeking sustenance. Of course we did not know that until afterwards. In that direction therefore we are not going to receive this year the full benefit of the reductions made in the staff because, as I say, the long service leave has to be paid for, although the men are idle. We expect a revenue of £3,990,000 as compared with £3,631,876 received last year, or an improvement of £358,124. I admit that we shall have to work pretty hard for it and will have to get back a fair amount of the traffic that has been taken from us by motor transport. However, we expect to get that improved revenue in different directions. The principal source will be in the haulage of wheat. Here we anticipate a revenue of £690,000 as compared with £520,540 last year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is very doubtful, when you consider the state of the market.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know that it is doubtful. I am hoping that the market will improve. Most people will agree with me that the wheat market is bound to improve. I do not feel any doubt about that. But whether or not the wheat market improves, the most difficult feature about it is that whatever may

be the price of wheat, unfortunately our farmers will have to sell.

Mr. Patrick: But they may not have the market.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have just said I do not think there will be any difficulty about the market. The quantity of wheat produced in Western Australia, or indeed in Australia, has very little bearing on the world's market price.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I wish you were right.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is no doubt whatever about it. From local timber we expect to receive £7,000 less revenue than last year, and from the haulage of local coal about £2,000 more. We expect to receive £11,000 additional from the carriage of wool, although actually we have reduced the freight on wool.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Yes, after I had brought my wool down.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, we must have a starting point somewhere. All I can say to the hon. member is that he should have approached me earlier, in which event I might have been able to effect the reduction earlier.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: When I heard of the reduction I thought you had done it specially to hit members of Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: On the passenger and parcels traffic we expect to receive £62,000 more than last year, on livestock £6,000 more, on all other traffic about £80,000 more, and from miscellaneous and rents £3,000 more. Increases we have made in certain freight rates, it is expected, will result in an increased revenue of £28,500. Those increases are not in directions that will do much harm to anybody. We hope that the amended Traffic Act when passed will have the effect of at least diverting back to us some of the traffic we have lost through motor transport.

Mr. Munsie: Not too much of it, unless you intend to tax the motors off the roads.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am inclined to agree with the hon. member. I am afraid we are not going to achieve quite as much as we expect. Certainly we are not going to break everybody who is running a motor car. I am afraid that in the end we will have to copy Victoria in imposing penalty rates against those who give us just what it suits them

to send by the railways, and who use motor transport for the balance of their business. The estimated expenditure for the current year is £3,020,000, or a reduction of £99,648, nearly £100,000, as against the actual expenditure for last year. That reduction is accounted for by the reduction in the basic wage from the 1st July, 1930, by the retirement of those on the staff who were 65 years of age, by other staff reductions throughout the service, and by economies generally. Last year our heavy expenditure was due in some measure to the fact that we attempted something which was not fair to our railways, in order to meet what was thought to be legitimate demands made by wheat acquiring agents in regard to the carrying of wheat over the railway system. We have to take over additional new lines, and for a number of years at least every new line we take over becomes a burden on the railway system. In my capacity as Minister for Railways I cannot help thinking the time has long passed when we should have made provision on our Estimates to relieve the Commissioner of Railways of losses incurred in the operation of new lines that have been put out in advance of settlement simply with the view to assisting the development of the country. The community ought to know just what it is costing us to develop our new areas. One can never know that cost by perusing Estimates of this nature. But it could be known if we had those losses definitely stated in a portion of our Estimates, and if an amount equivalent to the loss were made available to the Commissioner of Railways. It is not right that we should ask the whole of our railway system to bear the heavy losses on some lines that, after all, have been built, not with the hope of profit, but for the benefit of the farming community. We are hoping to make savings in other directions. The member for Hannans probably will have something to say about the cutting out of the running of the Boulder loop-line, which will save £16,000 per annum. We are sorry to have to do it. We may yet come to the point of running a steam coach or motor coach over that line, which would give a more frequent service at a very much less cost than obtains to-day. The tonnage of wheat carried over the railways last year was 850,045 tons, or a decrease of nearly 15,000 tons as against the imme-

dially preceding year. Yet the harvest was a better one from the point of view of gross production. The prospect for the present year is that we shall have a record harvest. With the carry-over from last year, if the market improves a little we hope that the carriage of wheat this year will be very much in excess of that of last year and so enable us to increase our earnings. We hope that with the additional locomotives that were locally built, and with the additional rolling stock, which carries a bigger load with less tare than was previously necessary, we shall be able to handle the wheat more cheaply this year than in the past. That is due largely to the foresight of my friend opposite in building the locomotives locally at a much lower cost than if they had been imported, and also in building the new trucks which, as I say, carry a bigger load with very much less tare. Those two factors are going to be our salvation in the handling of wheat during the coming season. In respect of the tramways, there has been very little change, except that we have been compelled to ration the work. Passengers were falling off, and we had to reduce our services.

Mr. Hegney: Were the passengers injured when they fell off?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, it was not that kind of falling off which alone appeals to the hon. member. Regarding the tramways, I honestly believe the traffic will improve. We have deliberately rationed the work rather than dispense with the services of trained men. Moreover, we did it because we believed that within a few months it will be necessary once more to restore all those men to full time. Regarding the electricity supply, we are once more up against difficulties due to the lack of funds. I still take pride in having established the East Perth power station, although sometimes we get unwarranted criticism of that enterprise. Unfortunately we are continually asked for current that we cannot supply.

Mr. Raphael: When you built the station it was declared to be too big.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I remember that very well. Yet we are always running the plant up to danger point in an attempt to cope with the demand for electric current. I have always viewed the establishment of such a station as being, not for

the purpose of running tramways, or providing light and power in the city, but for assistance in the development of the country adjacent to a populous centre. Electricity is the method by which most countries are making their biggest advances in production of one sort or another. But unfortunately to-day we are compelled to keep our electricity supply within a very small range. I was hoping to be able to extend it to the adjoining districts in order that producers might have the advantage of it. The member for Swan knows of a case in which we were able materially to assist a producer who, with that assistance, managed to lift himself from a condition that was practically slavery into one in which he is now doing very well.

Mr. Sampson: That is absolutely true.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The system ought to be extended, but we cannot do it just now because there are no funds available for the purpose. I wish to impress on members that we could have extended it but for the unfortunate agreement to which I was a party. In justice to others who were responsible for it, it should be said that at the time the agreement was made we had no idea that we would be faced by war conditions, followed by an increase in the cost of all our requisites. So we fixed the maximum price to be paid by our biggest consumer, the City Council, in the belief that it was well above what would be actually required. But very soon afterwards we had the war and the consequent increase in the prices of all our commodities. For instance, the biggest cost in the generating of electricity is fuel, and our fuel costs rose abnormally. When first the station was established fuel was obtained at a price of 10s. 4d. per ton, whereas to-day we have to pay 24s. 6d. per ton. So at that time we were able to estimate the cost of fuel at .165d. per unit generated, but to-day it is costing over .394d. per unit generated. But the unfair thing is that the City Council, with the full knowledge of that, has taken advantage of that agreement year after year and claimed their current at a price of .75d., whereas the production cost is well above that figure. Last year, I understand, the City Council made a profit of £70,000 as the result of that agreement. Personally I would not be averse to compelling the City Council to disgorge some of that profit to the people who

have provided the means by which the council have been able to obtain electric current at so cheap a rate. It would be to the advantage of everyone. No one would lose in the process. It is very unfair that the City Council, in view of the adverse conditions that have arisen since the agreement was made, should insist on sticking hard and fast to it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Is there anything in the contention that a mistake was made in regard to the radius?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think there is anything in that at all. There was a difference of opinion as to what was intended by the five miles radius; that is, whether it was five miles in a straight line from the G.P.O. or from the Town Hall, or five miles from side to side of the district served. It has been held that the five miles really represented the radius of a circle, the diameter thus being ten miles.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Has the original agreement been scrutinised to determine whether that is the true construction?

Mr. Sampson. The greater Perth extension has helped the City Council.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Undoubtedly, but there are a number of agreements with local authorities, whether wholly or partly within the five miles radius, that are not in accordance with the Act. Those authorities have contracted themselves out of the Act, and the City Council are not entitled to supply them with current. We could dispute the Subiaco agreement as being ultra vires, and the South Perth agreement is not in accordance with the Act. Both those agreements could be upset because they do not comply with the Act. None of those local authorities is game to face the position. It was never intended that the City Council, while receiving current at .75d., should sell to adjoining local authorities at more than actual cost. The City Council were to make no profit. However, no local governing body has been prepared to contest that point.

Mr. Sampson: Are many of them required to put up guarantees as are outer suburban districts?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not a local body that starts out with an agreement to take a million or a million and a half units. When an outside body requires only 3,000 or 4,000 units a year, it is quite reasonable that some guarantee should be

asked, just as the Water Supply Department ask for a guarantee for the extension of water mains. If the electricity agreement with the City Council had been properly observed by both parties, we could have supplied current to the more remote parts of the metropolitan area, and that would have been of immense benefit to the people, whereas we have been compelled to restrict extensions. The member for Leederville knows that North Beach has street lamps and the whole of the houses are connected with the electricity system. At North Beach there is a fair population. Electric current has also been carried to the City Beach, and there I am told there is only one resident. Between North Beach and City Beach is Scarborough Beach with a fair number of residents, but they cannot get the electric mains extended there. Whether it is feared that Scarborough might become a competitor with City Beach I do not know; I hope that is not the explanation, but the fact remains that Scarborough cannot get the current, because it is claimed that to supply it would involve the City Council in loss. These matters should be considered by Parliament, and if the City Council will not do the right thing, Parliament should seek a review of the conditions under which current is being supplied to the City Council at less than the cost of production. Some people may contend that we have no right to suggest breaking an agreement made with a local governing body. An agreement made by the Government with a local authority is tantamount to an agreement made by a parent with its offspring. The City Council, like other local governing bodies, are carrying on by virtue of powers granted by Parliament, and if they are doing something harmful to other sections of the community, Parliament is justified in compelling a review of the agreement. I believe we could with justice compel a review to enable us to provide a necessary commodity to people in the outer suburban areas. In conclusion, let me say it is with regret that I have had to introduce Estimates providing for a reduction of expenditure. I am hoping that things will not prove to be as bad as we anticipate, but that sooner than we expect we shall be able to call upon the retrenched men to return to the service. I assure members that we have not dispensed with the men's services because of inefficiency. We have discharged men who may be considered in this large department to be not quite as efficient as those who

remain, but to suggest that they are inefficient is to say something that is positively incorrect. Owing to the conditions prevailing, we have had to ask them to retire. Some of them are excellent tradesmen, but we have no work to offer them, and we cannot be expected to employ them when there is no work for them to do. While the action we have been forced to take may cause hardships, the Government can at least claim that they have made an honest attempt to meet an unfortunate position.

MR. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.12]: I do not desire to indulge in carping criticism of the Railway Estimates or of the administration of the department, but after listening to the Minister's introduction of the Estimates, I think that what the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) said regarding the Health Estimates applies equally to the Railway Estimates. They are framed on an unduly optimistic basis that cannot be realised unless conditions return to normal in a very short space of time, and that is almost too much to expect. The Minister estimates that the railway revenue is going to increase during a time of financial stress when business of all kinds throughout the State is being carried on in greatly reduced volume. How can he expect that one undertaking, and particularly a public utility largely dependent upon the volume of general business, can realise increased earnings during the year? The Minister anticipates receiving £350,000 more revenue than last year, while other businesses are suffering loss of trade. To that extent the Minister has taken an unduly optimistic view. During the three months of the financial year the revenue has declined by £60,000 as compared with the first quarter of last year, and that during a time when the heavy carry-over of wheat provided a considerable amount of traffic. Therefore it appears to me that the revenue will fall short of the estimate by £100,000, and if what the Minister said about expenditure being correspondingly reduced is correct, a very serious cut will have to be made. A point that struck me forcibly was the Minister's statement that the railways were not an ordinary commercial undertaking, but were a public utility designed to assist the development of the country. That is true. The system has never been regarded or operated as a commercial undertaking. The railways do many things for various indi-

viduals throughout the country at less than cost. Yet the Premier has said that regardless of what the railways may do for individuals or for the producers, expenditure must not be incurred in excess of the revenue earned. Manned by an efficient staff, the railways are still to be compelled to carry goods at less than payable rates, but the employees will not receive their wages unless, by the waving of some magic wand, the money can first be obtained. I believe the edict has gone forth from the Premier that the Commissioner must not expect to receive any money from the Treasury to cover losses, and that he must pay out only what money the railways earn. If that is so, we are departing entirely from the policy the Minister enunciated at the opening of his speech that the railways are a public utility designed to assist the development of the State. It is unreasonable to expect that commodities should be carried for the agricultural industry at a loss to the department, and that the employees' wages should suffer. If that is the position, we shall have to review the entire railway policy. It will mean that the system is to be no longer regarded in the light of a utility assisting the development of the country, but is to be run on commercial lines, extracting from the community it serves the whole cost of operating. Years ago I formed the view that, so long as we could manage to pull through, there was no need to alter the policy. This year, however, on account of the depression, we shall lose much of the higher class freight, simply because the business is not being done. Doubtless motor competition deprives the railways of a portion of such traffic, but the chief difficulty is that the higher class of freights will not be available in the usual volume because of the depression, and most of the freight offering will have to be carried at a loss. Consequently the railway employees are going to have their remuneration reduced for the purpose of subsidising the agricultural industry by carrying necessary commodities at a loss. I am not opposed to the State giving direct encouragement to industry through the medium of reduced railway freights, at any rate to a certain extent, but it is not fair or reasonable that the money represented should be taken from one section of the community, the section engaged in operating the railway system. Yet that is what will happen if the policy of the Premier is carried out.

Next year we shall probably have an increased area under cultivation and, as I pointed out last year, the greater proportion of railway freights will be low-rate commodities such as superphosphate, on which a loss will be incurred, and the loss will have to be made good either by direct subsidy from the Treasury as for developmental lines, or in some other way. If it is reasonable to pay a subsidy to meet the loss on developmental lines until they reach a paying basis, it is reasonable that the whole community should make good the loss incurred in subsidising the agricultural industry through the medium of exceptionally low freights. It is not reasonable that the personnel of the railways should be called upon to suffer reduced wages in order to make good such loss. I cannot see how the Minister's estimate can possibly be realised. During the first quarter of the financial year the revenue shows a drop of £60,000 on the earnings of the corresponding period of last year, whereas the expenditure has fallen by only £30,000. We were supposed to make £350,000 or more out of the railway traffic for the year, but instead of that during the first three months, we have made a loss of £30,000 compared with the operations in the same period of last year. There is one matter in the report of the Commissioner of Railways to which I should like to refer. This has already been mentioned by the Minister, namely, wheat traffic. The report says—

It is proposed to deal with the new season's wheat by spreading the haulage as evenly as possible throughout the 12 months.

I do not think the primary producers and the commercial community generally will agree that a policy of that kind should be laid down as a hard and fast rule at this stage of our existence.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There are outside circumstances which call the tune.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It may mean that the State will suffer an economic loss of hundreds of thousands of pounds if this policy is carried into effect. If wheat went up to 4s. or 4s. 6d. a bushel in January, as was the case last year, the same position would arise as existed last year. I was in Northampton in January, and whilst there I noticed that wheat was fetching 4s. 11½d. per bushel. Possibly the same set of cir-

cumstances which arose last year may arise next January. If wheat rises to, say, 4s. 6d. in January, and drops, as it has done this year, to 2s. 9d., we shall be unable, owing to the Commissioner's inability to transport it to the seaboard, to gain the advantage of the higher price, and it may be necessary to export much of our wheat at 2s. 9d. and suffer a huge loss.

The Minister for Railways: What is to prevent farmers from selling their wheat?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It cannot be sold if it cannot be delivered.

The Minister for Railways: Of course it can be delivered.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Not if, as the Commissioner says, it will take 12 months to haul it to the seaboard. I hope the Minister has read the Commissioner's report and that he does not agree with it.

The Minister for Railways: Of course I have read it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Does the Minister agree with the Commissioner's dictum? I hope he does not, in the interests of the country. If we cannot sell our wheat because it cannot be transported to the seaboard until the price has dropped considerably below what it has reached at the peak period, we may suffer a loss of 2s. a bushel. The Commissioner indicates that it is not his desire to haul that wheat more quickly than within a period of 12 months, and if he carries out that desire the State may lose hundreds of thousands of pounds. For lack of transport it may be impossible to sell our wheat at its highest price.

The Minister for Railways: In most cases the wheat is sold before ever it leaves the State.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Some wheat is sold to merchants, but last year 56 per cent. was handled by the pool or the warehousing scheme. Had the wheat been sold at a time when the price was high, our farmers would have been all right. Wheat can be sold only when it is transported to the seaboard. The member for Guildford-Midland knows that a considerable portion of our wheat is not sold until it is put on the ship. Sometimes, indeed it is not sold until it is half way across the world.

The Minister for Railways: If the market were there it would be sold.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The unfortunate part of it is that the market is not there. It may be there in January or February, and

possibly only one-sixth of the harvest may get the benefit of it. The rest of the wheat may have to wait so long for transport that the price may have fallen again. If we have that experience this year, we are likely to lose an enormous sum of money. The fair thing is to see that too much expense is not incurred in running special trains to convey the wheat to the seaboard. It could all be carried over a period not longer than eight months. During the first year or two, when I was Minister for Railways, it was expected that all the wheat should be in the buyers' hands by the end of February. That was not only impossible, but absurd. It is reasonable to say that most of our harvest should be transported in time to take advantage of the high prices that are generally ruling in the earlier part of the year. Although it is necessary for all expenditure to be most carefully studied, I hope the Commissioner will see that the bulk of our wheat is landed at the harbours not later than the end of June, if required.

The Minister for Railways: If it is required, I will guarantee that it will be there.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Let us be definite about this. The Commissioner says in his report—

It is proposed to deal with the new season's wheat by spreading the haulage as evenly as possible throughout the 12 months.

The Minister for Railways: As evenly as possible, he says. This means as evenly as the market requires.

Mr. WILLCOCK: There is no reference to the market in the report. The Commissioner is acting entirely in the interests of the railway system, for he goes on to say—

No overtime whatever will be resorted to in order to rush wheat to ports,—

He does not say anything about market prices there.

—nor will other traffic be set aside to give wheat preference.

The Commissioner says definitely that wheat will get no preference, but that the transport will be spread over 12 months. If wheat was at a high price at the beginning of the season, apparently it would be impossible for farmers to avail themselves of it, and they would have to accept the prices

ruling at the end of the year. If the Minister will read the report, he will see that this can mean nothing else. The Commissioner proceeds—

Rush business is expensive business, and while a continuous service will be maintained throughout the 12 months, which will give a much lesser number of bags each week in the first part of the season, at the same time it will give a better return to the department.

There is something more than a return for the department about the sale of our primary products. If the price is high in the early part of the season, we cannot afford to let our producers suffer a loss of 1s. or 1s. 6d. a bushel (even if this means a little loss to the railway system), because of the fact that transport facilities are denied by the Commissioner.

Mr. Wells: Price must control the delivery.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Commissioner says that the convenience of the Railway Department will control the transport of wheat. If it does not make much difference to the farmers, from the fact that the price has not greatly improved, it will be good business to handle the wheat on this basis, but if it does make an enormous difference, as was the case last year, the State may lose a million pounds through the carrying out of that policy. We cannot afford to lose that sum of money in order that the railways may save a few thousand pounds. I find, too, that the Commissioner proposes to postpone to a certain extent maintenance work. It has often been said that when Labour Governments have taken office it has been necessary to do a large amount of belated repairs and maintenance work. Although the Commissioner is justified in exercising every economy, it is not necessarily true economy to withhold maintenance work. It is, in fact, a foolish policy to do so. Eventually the work has to be done at almost double the cost, and at a considerable capital expenditure in order that belated repairs may be effected.

Mr. Withers: And there is great risk of damage to rolling stock should anything happen.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes. We did embark upon a policy of relaying and reballasting because the system was falling into a bad condition.

The Minister for Railways: We have done and are still doing some of that ourselves.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It may prove a costly business to economise in the matter of maintenance. No matter how inconvenient it may be, and even if it means a loss to the system of £40,000 or £50,000 a year, I should prefer to see that maintenance kept up. To neglect this work means there is grave possibility of accidents occurring and damage being done to rolling stock. The system must be kept up to the requisite standard of efficiency and safety. Another matter to which I desire to refer is the reference in the report to the work of the expert committee in regard to the revision of rates. The Commissioner says he will revise the rates to the extent of increasing the earnings of the department by £173,000 a year. Apparently he intends to take some of the reductions in the price charged to the higher-class commodities and put them upon the lower-class commodities. When the Commissioner recommends to the Minister that either the rates on super. or on wheat be made higher, or that some other commodity of the kind is charged a higher price in order to gain this extra £173,000, I fear that members of the Country Party will not be a happy family.

Mr. Wansbrough: Rates are going on to perishable goods to the extent of 15 per cent. more.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is on comparatively small parcels.

Mr. Griffiths: If things go on as they are at present, there will not be much to carry on the railways in a couple of years.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If no superphosphate is wanted in the country districts, we shall all have to get out. Our future prosperity and expansion depend upon the use of superphosphate and the development of our primary industries. If superphosphate is not going to be used there will not be room in this State for many people. We shall have to go ahead with our primary production, but this does not mean we should grow only wheat.

Mr. Griffiths: According to the "Daily News" we should grow Soya beans.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have been astonished recently to notice the difference in the outlook of farmers, and in the extent to which they are growing different things on their farms.

The Minister for Works: They are becoming more self-contained.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Hundreds of farms which 18 months ago had not a cow upon them are now pasturing cows, and hundreds of farmers who were growing no vegetables 18 months ago are now doing so.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that we are dealing with the Railway Estimates.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This all has to do with freights, and with the fact that the people must be kept on the land, and encouraged to get the best value possible out of their production. Without production on our farms we will have no Railway Estimates to deal with. The Minister should take the Committee into his confidence in the matter of the revision of rates, and tell us what it is proposed to do. We should not be kept on tenterhooks until Parliament has gone into recess, and then find that there has been a complete revision of the rates. If there is anything to discuss which is likely to have a detrimental effect upon the economic life of the State, money will have to be found to overcome the difficulty. We shall have to give our industries that protection which is necessary to keep them going. Members are entitled to a declaration on this question. We are entitled to full information to show in what manner the rates are going to be revised, and in what way this will affect not only the railway management but the economic life of Western Australia. Another matter to which I wish to refer is that of the Griffin coal mine. In view of the remarks that were made on the Address-in-reply, I expected the Minister would have had something to say on this question. In his report the Commissioner of Railways said it was not an economical proposition to use Griffin coal on the railways, and yet the Minister says they are continuing to do so. Why has influence been brought to bear on the Commissioner to continue the use of a coal that he says is not economical from the point of view of the railways? We have heard all sorts of innuendoes regarding the coal position. In the Legislative Council it was asserted that there exists a scandal that shrieks aloud for an inquiry by a Royal Commission. Many other statements have been made regarding the coal position. According to the report of the Commissioner, the use of Griffin coal is so economically un-

sound that the railways have been losing about 2s. on each ton of that coal used in the fireboxes. The information I have been able to glean is to the effect that we are still using about 400 tons of that coal per week, which means a loss of about £40 a week. There is no necessity for any such loss. If we can get better value by the use of other types of Collie coal, we should avail ourselves of the opportunity. There is no reason whatever why we should continue using a coal that is uneconomical. When I was Minister for Railways the Commissioner said he did not intend to use any more Griffin coal and the Government did not cavil at the decision of the Commissioner. They agreed with him. No opposition was raised to the Commissioner's attitude, and he was allowed to proceed at his own sweet will, and whatever he determined was permitted in the interests of the railway system. After the present Government assumed office, there was a reversal of that attitude and the railways have continued to use Griffin coal ever since. It is up to the Minister to give the House an explanation of why that course was followed. If there is a good explanation, Parliament and the country should be in possession of it. The Minister has not given us any information on the point, although I believe he did interject to the effect that it did not make much difference during the winter months. I have not heard that the Commissioner of Railways agreed with that view. In view of his report, however, we should have some explanation on the point, particularly as he said it was uneconomical to use the Griffin coal.

The Minister for Railways: But he said that before you opened the mine.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He said it after the mine had been opened, and after he had had a three-months' test of the Griffin coal.

The Minister for Railways: He did not.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is useless for the Minister to say that.

The Minister for Railways: But I know.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Minister is quite wrong.

The Attorney General: And you spent £20,000 on building a railway after that!

Mr. WILLCOCK: That money was spent by the Council of Industrial Development long before.

The Attorney General: The Council of Industrial Development does not spend that money.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It was spent by the Council.

Several members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon. members must keep order.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This question can be discussed quite calmly, even without the necessity for any supercilious laughter. The outstanding fact is that the Commissioner of Railways has reported, through Parliament, to the country that it is economically unsound to use Griffin coal on the railways, and he submits that report after a three months' test with the coal. That test was completed just before the Labour Government went out of office. The Commissioner was not concerned about the spending of £20,000 by anyone else; he was dealing with the coal only.

Mr. Wells: Is coal of greater value procured from the other mines at Collie?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, of greater economic value. The hon. member can ascertain that if he peruses the report of the Commissioner of Railways. A full page is devoted to that question. Parliament is entitled to an explanation from the Government regarding this position, seeing that the Commissioner, after his tests, definitely told the Government, of which I was a member, that he did not propose to use any more Griffin coal for three or four months in the summer time. The Labour Government agreed with his decision.

The Minister for Railways: No. You did not touch it any more; you kept off it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Commissioner said he would use no more of the coal and discussed the position with me as Minister. Deputations came to me and endeavoured to force me to do something that the Commissioner did not desire, and I as Minister refused. Is that not definite action? That is what occurred. The attorney for the company interviewed me as Minister for Railways on several occasions regarding the whole question. He urged me to postpone action.

The Attorney General: And you postponed action.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No.

The Attorney General: You did.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Minister knows nothing about it.

The Minister for Railways: You went on to use 400 tons.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The test did not finish until the 31st March, and the Minister knows when the election took place. The Government had to give a fortnight's notice.

The Minister for Railways: The elections took place on the 12th April.

Mr. WILLCOCK: And it was necessary to give a fortnight's notice.

The Minister for Works: The new Government took office on the 24th April.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Hon. members know quite well that when Governments are defeated at a general election, major decisions are never made by retiring Ministers. In the circumstances, all we did was to say that the existing condition should continue for the time being. We agreed with the Commissioner when he said he would take no more Griffin coal, despite the fact that I was subjected to pressure from different directions to reverse the Commissioner's decision. On the contrary, we upheld his decision and did not interfere with it at all. I do not suggest there is any scandal about the matter at all. For many years, people have said all sorts of things about Collie coal; they have seen evil in it; they have said the Commissioner of Railways was in the pay of the coal companies and that someone else had shares; they have asserted that coal was a dirty business and everyone that touched it was dirty too. I do not agree with those statements. During the whole of the negotiations that the Commissioner of Railways conducted with the coal companies, he has been absolutely straightforward and honest. I am positive of that after years of experience. I have had many opportunities to find out, and all the information I have been able to glean from various sources has been such as to convince me that the mud that has been thrown, and the innuendoes indulged in regarding the Railway Department, and particularly about the present Commissioner of Railways, have been quite undeserved. There is no scandal in connection with the business at all. Now, when the Commissioner states definitely he will use no more Griffin coal, it is up to the Government to give the Committee an explanation as soon as possible to indicate

why that coal is still being used. I give the Government credit for believing that there is some good reason for the action taken, but we should know the explanation so that we can be satisfied on the point. I hope that before the debate closes, the Minister will furnish us with the explanation.

MR. RAPHAEL (Victoria Park) [9.54]: I shall not delay the Committee for long but certain points were touched on by the Minister that I wish to deal with. At the outset the Minister's attitude reminded me that whenever possible he has advocated the use of local products as one means of absorbing the unemployed. That point appeals to me strongly because it affects the construction of wagons for our railways. I find that we are importing steel for use in connection with that wagon construction, in preference to the use of our own timbers.

The Minister for Railways: You are not blaming me for that, are you?

Mr. RAPHAEL: Yes, you or the Minister before you. It stands to the discredit of the man responsible for the job, whether it is the present Minister or the man who preceded him in that office. I blame the Minister because the Government at present in power promised the Government workers that there would be no interference with their working conditions, or with their long service leave. To-day, however, hundreds of those workers have been thrown out of employment and there is the abolition of long service leave before them as well. If the Government can get a move on in one direction and say that the people should use local products, they should apply that principle in other directions and use local timbers for the construction of railway rolling stock. If anything was done by the previous Government, then they are as much to blame as the present Minister. We are told that the British Government do this and do that. The British Government are constructing the whole of their railway rolling stock with wood, mostly Western Australian timbers.

Mr. Willcock: I do not think that is quite right.

Mr. RAPHAEL: It is quite right; at any rate, a fair proportion of it is.

Mr. Willcock: Some of it may be.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Then the Minister has to take part of the blame attachable to the Labour Government.

The Minister for Railways: You are entirely right in your statements, except where they are wrong.

Mr. RAPHAEL: If it is good enough for England, it should be good enough for Western Australia. We are continually being told that Britain has informed us that we must live within our means. If it is good for us to follow the advice of Great Britain in one direction, we should follow it in other directions as well. The Minister has told us that he expects the revenue of the department to be altered to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Yet he is dismissing hundreds of men who have been charged with the responsibility of earning that revenue for him. If the men, whose experience enables them to earn the money for the Government, are discharged from the railways, how the deuce does the Minister expect to get in the revenue. The tramways are in the same position. Men are being discharged or put on short time. The traffic is being cut out almost completely on some lines, while in other directions it is being seriously curtailed. Now we find the Government stepping in and imposing heavy financial burdens on motor traction in the anticipation that revenue will be derived from them. I cannot see how the deuce that will be effected. Perhaps the Government may have some method in view by which the revenue will be returned to them without the traffic being run at all. I cannot see how that position will develop in favour of the Government. The Minister has frequently touched on the question of utilising local products. The girders for the bridge that is being constructed at present, are being imported from overseas. At the same time a factory capable of turning out the girders in Western Australia has been closed down. Yet we continue to import from Belgium and England.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. RAPHAEL: It is a fact. Some of the girders are being imported to-day. The time has come when the Government should refrain from adopting that course.

The Minister for Railways: You are not blaming me.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I will blame the Minister. I do not care a hang—

The Minister for Railways: But that was done before my time.

Mr. RAPHAEL: If the previous Government were to blame, the Minister has fol-

lowed in their footsteps. Personally, I am not concerned as to who was to blame. If the Minister is to advocate the use of local goods, then it is up to the Government to adopt the same policy. I can remember the Minister for Railways castigating the City Council for putting in imported pipes when the council was constructing mains. Yet we have the Minister for Railways following in the bad footsteps of the Perth City Council.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Yes. Until the Government make a sincere effort to curtail to-day's adverse trade balance, things cannot improve, especially having regard to the bad administration of the previous Federal Government. The Minister touched on what is a sore point with him, the profit made by the Perth City Council from a product which is manufactured by the Government and then passed on to the City Council for distribution. The City Council pay the Government a higher rate for electricity than is received by any other Australian Government manufacturing electricity. Mr. Taylor said that as time went on the cost of production would be reduced. That has not turned out so. The City Council have brought into operation a system by which huge profits are made from the electricity previously disposed of by the Government at a loss. We have no right to take from the City Council the electricity and gas department which is the child of the late Mr. Crocker. Under Government administration that department would not make the profits now being realised. When a member of the Perth Road Board, the Minister for Railways battled for reduction in the cost of lighting in the ward he represented. His untiring efforts to ensure that his advocacy shall bear fruit will probably cause the City Council to lose control of electricity distribution, and then the Perth Road Board will be able to obtain electricity at a much cheaper rate. I entirely disagree with some of the Minister's remarks as to a Minister in charge of a department having no right to interfere with the management of the administrative head.

The Minister for Railways: Who said that?

Mr. RAPHAEL: The remarks of the Minister led up to that conclusion. If Ministers were to assert themselves a little more, such huge losses would not be shown on Government concerns. Ministers have control of this House; I say that not only of the

present Ministers, but also of previous Ministers. Yet we are supposed to have control of the Government and of the country. During my cruises around the city I have noticed that in various Government departments the Minister exercises no more control than I do. I appeal to Ministers to take more interest in their departments, to give a little more time to them, and to take up matters which they should take up. Another factor which has a serious bearing upon the position of the community is the discharge of numerous employees who have rendered faithful service. I do not wish to castigate the Minister for Railways unduly, but I call to mind that on the public platform he definitely promised the workers that no action would be taken against them, and that practically none of them would be discharged from Government employment. Only the other day a constituent of the Minister for Railways came to me and said, "This is what I get for working and voting for Jack Scaddan!" I said, "It jolly well serves you right."

The Minister for Railways: I warrant you said nothing of the kind.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I did.

The Minister for Railways: Then you have forgotten all the language you ever learned.

Mr. RAPHAEL: That may be correct. I appeal to the Minister in charge of railways and tramways—many of my constituents being tramway employees—to restore the services which preceded his taking office, so that all the railway and tramway men may again have to work. With that end in view let the Minister re-establish the tramways and railways on their old footing. If the Government are sincere in their declarations, they will immediately initiate better railway and tramway services in opposition to the huge competition of taxis and buses. That will bring about a lessening of the present unemployed problem.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [10.6]: In view of the position which has arisen by reason of our having jumped from the Agricultural Department to one of the most important questions that will come up for consideration during this session, I suggest that progress be reported.

The Minister for Railways: Oh, no! That is not fair.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: This is a big department.

Mr. MARSHALL: Had we known that the Railway Department was to be discussed this evening, we would have come prepared. We obliged the Premier by jumping over four departments to the railways, a department on which many members desired to speak. I think the Premier in his turn should be generous and reciprocate. I move—

That progress be reported.

The Premier: You cannot move that now.

Motion (progress) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	3
Noes	..	..	..	25

Majority against .. 22

AYES.

Mr. Johnson
Mr. Marshall

Mr. Raphael

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Barnard
Mr. Brown
Mr. Collier
Mr. Davy
Mr. Doney
Mr. Ferguson
Mr. Hegney
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Lamond
Mr. Latham
Mr. H. W. Mann
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Millington

Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Munroe
Mr. Panton
Mr. Parker
Mr. Sampson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Wells
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Withers
Mr. North

(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.15]: I desire to pay a tribute to the railways for the assistance rendered in regard to the free display of posters in connection with the sale of fruit; also in regard to the special rates charged for the carriage of single cases of fruit, and to the operation of the cash-on-delivery system. Unfortunately, however, this method is not well known. The great bulk of the public are unaware that it is in operation, and I suggest that the railways should give greater publicity to this most convenient service. A lesson can be learned from the work of the Victorian railways. There the "Eat more fruit" campaign has been responsible for a very large increase in the

distribution and consumption of fruit. A scheme which has been initiated and found most helpful in Victoria is the appointment of railway station-masters as agents. Under this scheme a resident goes to the station office to purchase a case of oranges. The station-master takes the order and the money, sends the order to the fruit distributing organisation the same day, and the money to the railway auditor of receipts, who forwards it to its proper destination as ordinary railway revenue. The manager of the fruit distributing organisation arranges for one of the fruit associations to supply the oranges. The grower pre-pays all freight charges, and the resident purchaser goes to the station and picks up his case of oranges. This has proved a very valuable scheme. A step in the direction of publicity and distribution has already been taken by our own Railway Department. The publicity that has been given by our railways is very much appreciated by at least a section of our citrus producers. Each year since the inception of the "Eat more fruit" movement in Victoria the procedure adopted has proved increasingly successful. The assistance rendered by the Victorian railways has been of a very definite nature, and a recent circular issued by the department explains why the department is in the fruit business. Actually it is helping to avoid waste, assisting to absorb production and swell the carriage on the railways and consequently the railway receipts, and so enhance the prosperity of the State. The fruit industry in Victoria supports approximately 10,000 growers, and produces £6,000,000 worth of fresh, canned and dried fruits annually. The annual fruit production of Australia is valued at £18,000,000, and so it will be seen that Victoria produces a third of the full value of fruit production in Australia.

The Minister for Railways: What about the Railway Department?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Railway Department co-operate with the various fruitgrowers' associations, and the work done has proved very helpful. In the efforts to assist the dried fruits industry, the Victorian Dried Fruits Board co-operated with the department in circulating posters and contributed to the cost of a recipes booklet. That statement sounds very trifling, but actually the work done by the Victorian Railway De-

partment in the matter of publicity is having a wonderful effect. Some 100,000 copies of the booklet have been issued.

Mr. Marshall: There would be some work in printing that book.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not wish to suggest anything regarding the printing. The Victorian Railway Department have their own printing establishment, and have produced a very fine booklet. Their posters illustrating various fruits are works of art, and the effect is beneficial in every respect. Apart from providing additional freight for the railways, the object of the movement is to give the people of the country opportunities to buy fruit at reasonable prices. Our railways have started on the same lines, but have not got very far. I am hoping that the same spirit as animates the Victorian Railways will animate our department in the fullest possible degree.

The Minister for Railways: What about orange juice?

Mr. SAMPSON: I shall give the Minister information regarding fruit juices at a later stage. In 1926 the Victorian Railway Department helped materially in securing the success of the great peach week, when 70 tons of Elberta peaches were carried from railway stalls by buyers. That is an indication of what one enthusiastic man like Mr. Clapp can do. I believe he is largely responsible for this wonderful wave of enthusiasm which has been maintained for several years. In 1928 the Railway Department disposed of approximately 10,000 cases of peaches averaging 40 lbs. per case and $4\frac{1}{2}$ peaches to the lb., the total weight being nearly 200 tons. Nearly 2,000,000 peaches were sold, which was equal to two peaches to every man, woman and child in Melbourne. These sales were of tremendous importance not only to the fruitgrowers but to the whole community of Victoria. I hope the Premier will follow the advice "Eat more fruit." If there is anything calculated to secure robustness, it is a fruit diet. The dried fruit industry, too, has been assisted by the Victorian Railways. When the department started to make raisin bread, three bakers only were turning it out. Now there are approximately 350. At the Railway bakery and refreshment rooms and kiosks, over 20 tons of raisins, sultanas, etc., are used each year. The Railway Department, too, are the largest retail customers of the citrus growers. During the year 1928-29 they purchased 35,490 cases of citrus fruits, including grape-

fruit, and paid £24,688 to the growers. I may inform the Minister for Railways, who is greatly interested in fruit juices, that the department have 27 fruit stalls, and others are contemplated. At those stalls 98 juice extractors are being operated, and the number is being added to. The Victorian Railways were the first to introduce fruit-juice extractors into Australia. The campaign to encourage the drinking of more fruit is proving beneficial to the growers and to the railways. The principal fruit-drink stall is located at the Flinders-street station. During the year 1928-29, 840,900 drinks were sold, an average of over 16,000 a week. The total number of drinks sold by all fruit and fruit-drink stalls during the same period was 1,535,380. We talk of the advantages of the "Eat more fruit" policy, but the Railway Department of Victoria carry it into effect, and the growers are much indebted to the department for all that has been done. I appreciate the action of the Western Australian Railways in displaying, without charge, posters advertising the sale of fruit as supplied by the growers to the department. I hope the Commissioner, and those associated with him, who are keenly anxious to do all in their power, will extend the good work. I hope the Minister, who is full of enthusiasm, and has ideas, will lend his encouragement, and thereby assist the growers to obtain a better market and a better distribution of fruit throughout the country districts. Any reference to these Estimates would be incomplete if I did not touch upon the supply of electric current. I should like an assurance from the Premier, through the Minister, that consideration will be given this session to the people in the outer suburban districts who need electric current for power purposes.

The Premier: I will give an assurance to consider it.

Mr. SAMPSON: I thank the Premier. Knowing his sincerity, I will not regard that as other than a serious promise. It would be bad if a statement like that were made with any other object than to convey to the public a real intention. Western Australia should get into step with other States in the matter of supplying current to its producers. When in company with the present Minister for Lands I visited Austria, we were impressed with the fact that the country was criss-crossed with electric cables. The same thing applies to

other European countries. In Sweden it is even more manifest, whilst in Norway, a comparatively small country with a population of less than 2½ millions, electricity is used in every possible way. As the Minister for Railways has said on different occasions, there is no cheaper power than electric current, and a wise Government will use every opportunity to produce a low-priced power. That power can be produced by means of our own Colliery coal. We should thus give to those concerned in the production of our primary requirements the type of power they need, and provide additional work for those who are engaged in the coal mining industry and generally add to the prosperity of all concerned.

Progress reported.

BILL—STATE TRADING CONCERNS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council, and read a first time.

House adjourned at 10.33 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 11th October, 1930.

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

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHLAIN
(Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.36]: Ever since I have been a member of this House, the question of continuing the Industries