

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 9th November, 1927.

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

QUESTION—FEDERAL ROAD GRANT.

Expenditure in Geraldton and Greenough Districts.

Hon. G. TAYLOR asked the Minister for Works: What was the amount of money spent in the Geraldton and Greenough road districts, from the 1st January to the 31st October, 1927, under the Federal Aid Roads Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Geraldton Road Board district, nil. Greenough Road Board district—developmental roads: Georgina N.E. and S.W. road £450, McCartney road £500; Trunk road: Moora-Geraldton, Crampton section £13,000. Total £13,950.

QUESTION—RAILWAY, EJANDING NORTHWARD.

Mr. LINDSAY asked the Minister for Works: 1, Will the Ejanding Northward railway, or any portion of it, be available for moving this season's harvest? 2, If so, how many miles will be available and when will the section be open for traffic? 3, Have arrangements been made for stacking site at sidings? 4, Will the railway be available to shift superphosphate? 5, If so, when?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, 10 miles by January; 30 miles by March; 57 miles by May; these on the assumption that rails now on order are

delivered, as expected. 3, Dumps can be arranged at the following siding sites if required:—(1) 124m. 40chns., (2) 129m. 40chns., (3) 134m. 65chns., (4) 142m. 43chns., (5) 149m. 3chns., (6) 155m. 17chns., (7) 162m. 16chns., (8) 167m. 35chns., (9) 175m. 20chns., Kulya. 4 and 5, See answer to 2.

QUESTION—LAND INSPECTION, DANDARRAGAN-JURIEN BAY.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has an officer of the Agricultural Bank or the Lands Department made an inspection of the country between Dandarragan and Jurien Bay? 2, If so, is it the Minister's intention to lay the report on the Table?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, See reply to Question 1.

QUESTION—PARLIAMENT HOUSE, COMPLETION.

Mr. NORTH asked the Premier: 1, What is the estimated cost of completing Parliament House? 2, Does the scheme entail the removal of the Public Works Department and Water Supply Department buildings? 3, Has a modified proposal to include the erection of suitable quarters for the "Hansard" staff been investigated?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No recent estimate has been prepared. 2, The original scheme provided for the removal of the Public Works and Water Supply building. 3, No.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Inaccurate Division List.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [4.35]: I desire to make a personal explanation. A division was taken on Thursday night last on the second reading of the State Insurance Bill. I was appointed teller on the Government side of the House. The name of the member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) was included among those voting with the "Ayes" instead of that of the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally). As it appears in the "Votes and Proceedings" and in "Hansard" and is an obvious mistake, it should be corrected. Mr. Chesson's name appears correctly in "Hansard" among the pairs as voting with the "Ayes."

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. North, leave of absence granted to the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) for two weeks on the ground of ill-health, and to the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) for one month on the ground of urgent private business.

BILL—STATE INSURANCE.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—BRIDGETOWN LOT 39A.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon.

A. McCallum—South Fremantle [4.38] in moving the second reading said: The old Mechanics' Institute at Bridgetown was vested in trustees, to be used as an institute and library. The trustees desired to be relieved of their trust and transferred the property to the local road board. The Titles Office have refused to make the transfer because of the trust that the deed contained. The object of the Bill is to permit of the transfer being made from the trustees to the road board. The idea of the latter is to either raise a loan to erect a new building on the existing site and to provide an up-to-date mechanics' institute and library, or to sell the present site and to purchase a new one and erect another building for the same purposes as those for which the old one has been utilised. The trustees and the local authority have been urging for some time that this course should be adopted. There is no division of opinion among the people concerned, and it is merely a question of giving effect to the desires of those in the locality. We frequently have Bills of this description before us, permitting the sale of property, provided that the money arising from the transaction shall be used for similar purposes in respect of another block. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—DOG ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. LATHAM (York) [4.41] in moving the second reading said: I do not anticipate any opposition to the Bill because I believe

all hon. members are seized with the desirability of fostering the sheep-raising industry. The Bill will assist in that direction. Frequently the House has passed measures with the object of assisting those engaged in sheep raising, either by affording protection or in other directions. That was done when the Vermin Act was amended a little while ago and taxation was imposed to assist in the destruction of dingoes and wild dogs. The Bill proposes to go a little further in that direction so that there shall be a more careful control exercised over domestic dogs. During the last year or two the Road Boards Association, the Pastoralists' Association, the Primary Producers' Association, and practically every local authority throughout the State have interested themselves in the problem of the domestic dogs that have a tendency to run wild. The object of the Bill is to render assistance in that direction. It is not intended to provide the local authorities with greater power if they do not desire to use it. It has to be admitted that much of the power already vested in local authorities has not been used by them through their officials. While I regret that the importance of the legislation already in existence has not appealed to everyone concerned, I hope the introduction of the Bill will bring home to them the fact that the handling of such measures should be treated more seriously than in the past. The Bill will provide further assistance to those who may require to exercise the powers. The Bill will give power to local authorities to refuse to register any mongrel known to them.

The Minister for Works: It does not say "mongrels" in the Bill.

MR. LATHAM: At present any quadruped may be brought along and be registered by the authorities. I hope that no local authority will refuse to register a good useful dog. This will merely give them power to refuse to register any dog that they think should not be registered.

The Minister for Works: And if there is a disagreement as to whether the dog should be registered, you expect me to decide the question? I thought you objected to my having such power.

MR. LATHAM: Now the Minister has admitted that he does everything. I will not credit him with that altogether. His officials will be quite competent to deal with that phase and it is only fair to give the people the right of appeal to the Minister controlling the department that administers the

provisions of the Dog Act and similar legislation. I hope the Minister will not raise that question and oppose the Bill because he happens to be the Minister in charge of that department.

Mr. Marshall: What about the position of the S.P.C.A.?

Mr. LATHAM: I shall have something to say regarding that body later on. This will give local authorities the right to refuse registration in respect to domestic dogs that they know to be a menace to the community. Such dogs may be known to be allowed by their owners to run all over the place. Frequently dogs constitute an annoyance to people using the roads. It is difficult to destroy them under many circumstances. I know people can take legal proceedings against the owner, but many do not care to do that. This measure will remove the necessity for that by giving the local authority power to refuse registration.

Mr. Maley: What do you propose to do—make an old men's home for dogs?

Mr. LATHAM: Section 5 of the existing Act makes it obligatory on local authorities to register all dogs presented for registration. It is proposed to repeal that section and make it unlawful to keep a dog that is not registered.

Mr. Marshall: That is the law now; they have that power.

Mr. LATHAM: No; local authorities have no power to refuse to register a dog.

The Premier: Every dog has to be registered.

Mr. LATHAM: The Solicitor General informs me that it is necessary to repeal that section of the Act. It is admitted that some tightening up of the law is necessary.

The Premier: Will this apply all over the State?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes.

The Premier: Where are the sheep in the city?

Mr. LATHAM: The Premier is anticipating that local authorities in the metropolitan area are likely to refuse to register a dog.

The Premier: Of course they are.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think they will. The Dog Act is a piece of revenue-producing legislation. Every dog registered means at least 7s. 6d. to the local authority. I should like to see done in this State what is done in the Eastern States, namely the collection of dog fees entrusted to the police. I think the Act would then be better admin-

istered. The responsibility here is thrown on the local authorities, and very often they are indifferent.

The Minister for Works: You opposed that principle in respect to traffic fees.

Mr. LATHAM: I cannot see any analogy between traffic fees and dog licenses. I am not discussing the Traffic Act. There is no likelihood of the City Council refusing to register any dog that ought to be registered. I have no objection to excluding the metropolitan area if the Premier so desires. The only interest I have in the Bill is to secure greater protection for people who are running sheep in the country. I am sure the member for Leonora (Mr. Heron) will agree with the Bill.

Mr. Heron: The member for Leonora will not back up that argument.

Mr. LATHAM: Then some of the pastoralists in his electorate may have something to say on the question. Members have not yet had time to peruse the Bill. When they have considered it carefully, I am sure they will give it a better reception. If we do not control domestic dogs, we shall really be setting up a system of breeding dogs, and as it costs £2 per head to destroy them, a remunerative industry will have been established. A well-known North-West pastoralist informed the Press the other day that one man alone had caught 25 dingoes in a night. Those dogs represented bonuses amounting to £50. With a little careful breeding, a very big industry could be built up. Something should be done to guard against that sort of thing. If the present Bill does not meet with the approval of the House, I have no desire to force it on the House, but I hope members will assist to improve it.

The Premier: It proposes to give too much power to local bodies.

Mr. Maley: First of all you seek to introduce provisions to destroy dogs, and later on to protect them.

Mr. LATHAM: For seven years I have waited in this Chamber for the hon. member to introduce a Bill to effect some improvement, and apparently I am likely to have to wait another seven years.

Mr. Maley: But under one part of the measure you seek to destroy dogs and then to make a suitable home for dogs. There is no sense in it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The "new party" is up against the member for York.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the member for Irwin will assist to make a satisfactory measure of the Bill.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is tuning you up a bit.

Mr. LATHAM: If the measure is not acceptable in its present form, I hope members will suggest improvements so that it will protect the sheep-raising industry. I have no objection to excluding the metropolitan area, but I do desire to secure greater protection for the people engaged in sheep raising.

Mr. Kenneally: What do you propose to do with dogs for which registration is refused?

Mr. LATHAM: They will be destroyed.

Mr. Maley: Then how can we support you in providing a suitable home for dogs?

Mr. LATHAM: Of course the member for Irwin is not acquainted with the Act. When the Bill of 1923 was being considered in another place, it was thought some consideration should be given to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I have decided that, as regards the Bill, that consideration should still be extended to the society. The society takes charge of lost dogs that often are valuable and holds them until an opportunity offers to sell or otherwise dispose of them. I have no intention of interfering with that provision. The remaining portion of the Bill is designed to give power to local authorities to make by-laws to restrict the number of dogs that any one person may keep and to control all dogs during night time.

Mr. Panton: Is that a new method of preventing the introduction of tin hare racing?

Mr. LATHAM: A measure dealing with that subject will be brought before us in due course and the hon. member will then have an opportunity to discuss it.

The Premier: Will the Bill prohibit a man from keeping more than one dog down here?

Mr. LATHAM: That can be left to the common sense of the Minister and of the local authorities administering the Act. If the measure becomes law, I am satisfied it will be administered with that amount of common sense usually displayed by local authorities, and I am sure the Minister will see it is administered properly.

Mr. Richardson: It would be necessary to inspect every dog.

The Minister for Works: Everyone with a grievance about a dog will be leading it on a chain to the Public Works Office.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Minister does not regard the measure in that way. That is not the intention of it. The powers sought should be granted. Who is better qualified than the officials mentioned to judge whether it is advisable that a dog should be registered?

Mr. Maley: It is quite right that all dogs should be registered.

Mr. LATHAM: I anticipate no trouble in the administration of the measure. There should be some control of dogs in the agricultural and pastoral districts.

Mr. Sleeman: But you are not confining the measure to the agricultural and pastoral districts.

Mr. LATHAM: If the House so desires I have no objection to restricting its operations to districts outside the metropolitan area.

Mr. Sleeman: If a man were out prospecting with a dog and a tent, would he be brought under the measure?

Mr. LATHAM: Under most of our laws it would be possible to inflict hardship, if that were desired, but I have rarely heard of any hardship having been inflicted. Members are needlessly anticipating a lot of trouble. The members of the local governing bodies in the mining areas will protect the prospectors. The value of the prospectors is well recognised by them and any assistance they could give would be given. They are an open-hearted lot of people, endowed with as much common-sense as God has given most of us, and I do not think any trouble need be feared on that score.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you think local authorities would be capable of examining a dog working sheep on a station?

Mr. LATHAM: Seeing that pastoralists are often well represented on local governing bodies, I believe they would. Provision has been made in the Act to give pastoralists the right to keep certain dogs free.

Hon. G. Taylor: I have no objection to your registering them all, but you wish to give the local authorities power to decide how many dogs a man may keep.

Mr. LATHAM: All I ask is that local authorities shall have power to make by-laws to restrict the number of dogs that may be kept, and to control dogs between sunset and sunrise. In due course the hy-

laws would be laid on the Table of the House, and surely that would afford sufficient protection! There is no need to raise something in the nature of a bogey at this stage.

Hon. G. Taylor: The by-laws may be in operation for six months while the House is not sitting and may inflict hardship during that period.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think there is any likelihood of that.

Hon. G. Taylor: You know it has occurred.

Mr. LATHEAM: To facilitate the administration of the measure, I am hopeful that a set of regulations will be drafted by the Department of Agriculture, the officials of which are interested in sheep-raising, and consequently no hardship will be inflicted. I hope members will not throw the Bill out because they fear some imaginary trouble. I hope they will assist to improve the measure and make it effective for the control of domestic dogs. I have interested myself in this matter solely to assist industry and I hope I shall have the help of members of this House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

BILL—BROOMEHILL LOT 602.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [4.59]: In moving the second reading said: At Broomehill there is an old agricultural hall vested in the local authority and there is also a large public hall. The road board are of opinion that the agricultural hall has outlived its usefulness. Not only is it a very old building, but it is quite a small one. The public hall is rather a big building and the local authority desire permission to sell the old agricultural hall and site and use the money derived from the sale to line the public hall, erect offices at the front of it to accommodate the road board and provide a supper room and one or two ante-rooms.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the agricultural hall.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS**: The agricultural hall is an old building and it is desired to dispose of it. It is too small for

the requirements of the district and a new hall has been erected. The proceeds of the sale of the old building will be spent on the new building to provide better accommodation for the road board staff and erect one or two ante-rooms as well. This is very similar to the previous Bill that I introduced this afternoon. It is quite common, when the growth of districts is such that the old buildings are no longer suitable for the requirements of the people, for the local authorities to desire to dispose of them. The best means of dealing with those old buildings is to allow the local authority to get rid of them, so long as the funds raised are used to give the people the facilities that were intended to be given when the original grant was made. Almost every session we have Bills similar to this from one district or another. I understand there is complete unanimity as to the object this measure seeks to achieve. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.1]: I support the second reading of the Bill. The measure is in accordance with the desires of the people of the district. The old building is too small. It is desired to dispose of the old building and use the proceeds in making additions to the present large hall. This will be very beneficial to the town and will make the position more satisfactory and convenient from the point of view of the road board.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [5.2]: I should like to know whether the two blocks, one containing the old building and the other the new, are apart from each other.

Mr. Thomson: They are quite separate.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The new building is more convenient than the old?

Mr. Thomson: Yes.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The land and the building are being sold for the purpose of raising money with which to equip the other building that is found to be more suitable?

Mr. Thomson: Yes. There is a large hall there, one of the largest in the district. It is desired to make additions in front of it for the convenience of the road board. The structure is of iron.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: In the opinion of the people that is the most suitable place for a hall?

Mr. Thomson: Yes.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: And this money will be used only for that purpose?

Mr. Thomson: Yes.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: If that be so, there can be no objection to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1927-28.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 2nd November; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Department of Railways, Tramways, and Electricity Supply (Hon. J. C. Willcock, Minister).

Vote—Railways, £2,932,500:

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.7]: I do not intend to speak at any length in introducing these Estimates. The operations of the Railway Department have been carried out very satisfactorily to all sections of the community. The commercial side of the concern has been well looked after, and the requirements of the people have been catered for better than could have been expected. The actual amount of cash it is estimated will be received during the year is £3,890,000, and the expenditure is set down as £2,932,500, leaving a net revenue of £957,500. It is anticipated that the interest debits will amount to £940,000, so that the probable surplus at the end of the year will be about £17,500. These are the Treasury figures. They are a little different from the commercial figures that are used by the Railway Department when preparing their returns. The department take into account the outstanding revenue and the expenditure which do not come within the financial year. It is expected that the railways will be £15,750 better off than they were last year. This result is dependent on the record harvest which has been predicted. We have reached the stage now when this record harvest is almost a certainty. If this should happen, the estimates on both sides, that is, revenue and expen-

diture, will be found to be not unduly optimistic. The results achieved during the last four months show that the estimate is easily within the bounds of possibility. It is very probable that the revenue may be a little greater than was anticipated when the original estimate was made.

Hon. G. Taylor: And I suppose the expenditure will be less.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:

The ratio of expenditure to revenue will at least be the same as that which has been forecast. If the revenue is any greater than has been foreshadowed, the expenditure will not be greater in ratio to it than has been estimated. Indeed, if we can get very much increased revenue, the expenditure will not be as great as the additional revenue, and we may therefore obtain improved financial results. Anything may happen, but the first four months of the year have indicated that we shall reach our estimate without very much trouble. We anticipate that additional revenue will be collected to the extent of £316,000. The forecast indicated that there will be considerable increase in the business of the railways during this period of 12 months. To earn that additional £316,000, it is proposed to increase the expenditure by £248,000 on improvements that will be made from loan funds. The estimated increase in interest charges will be £2,000, which will give the result I have indicated, a profit at the end of the year of about £17,000. While the amount collected last year was a record since the inception of the railways, with the full acreage available under crop and the general activity and prosperity that are evidenced in the State, there is every indication that the estimate will be realised. We in this State are very fortunate in our railway system. During the past seven or eight years, and especially during the last four or five years, there has been a very wise expenditure of loan money, and this expenditure has effected considerable economies in the working of the railways. We are very much better off with our railways than are the Eastern States. Ours is the only system in Australia that is showing a profit. We are fortunate in respect to our original capital expenditure on railways, inasmuch as the cost of construction per mile is considerably less than it is in other parts of the Commonwealth. It is therefore not necessary for us to find so large an amount of interest on capital expenditure, which allows us to

work the system to greater advantage. I will give members some figures concerning the other systems in Australia, so that they may know how we stand in comparison with them. The commercial figures appertaining to the railways in this State showed a profit last year of £34,000. In South Australia the loss was roughly £890,000 that is excluding about £200,000 for depreciation charges which could be applicable to that year. The Government of that State are giving serious consideration to the position of their railways. When I was there two or three weeks ago a report was made available by the Finance Committee which had undertaken to overhaul the monetary operations of the system. I noticed in the Press during the last few days that drastic economies are proposed there as well as considerable reductions in the personnel of the Department. The members of the committee are not directly concerned in the running of the railways. They are mostly men who have been engaged in expenditure properly debited to loan. In South Australia during the last five years £11,000,000 have been spent from loan in an endeavour to rehabilitate the system. A considerable amount of our work is debited to loan, such as new trucks and new engines, crossings and other things which are used for increasing the capital account of the railways, and which are all debited to loan and come under loan expenditure.

Mr. Kennelly: South Australia gives orders for rolling stock mainly to Yankee firms.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A considerable proportion of the materials used in additions to the South Australian system are manufactured locally. The wages of the men actually working on those materials are debited to Loan Account.

Hon. G. Taylor: Those men are not members of the permanent running staff.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Some of them are. South Australia, unfortunately, is suffering a severe reverse in its wheat production this year. That production, it is estimated, will be reduced by 60 or 70 per cent. below the normal. The reduction will mean so much less work for the railway system, and will correspondingly affect, owing to the reduced circulation of money, all other classes of business.

Hon. G. Taylor: South Australia's pastoral industry, too, is suffering.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Victorian railways made a loss of £47,000.

Victoria, unlike Western Australia, pays a considerable amount of money annually from its Treasury to its Railway Department for losses incurred on agricultural lines. Last year £411,000 was credited to the Victorian Railway Department by the Treasury in compensation for such losses. Here agricultural lines, and isolated lines like the Ravensthorpe, are all included in the general system, and still we contrive to get round and to earn sufficient revenue to make ends more than meet. The loss on the New South Wales railways last year amounted to £451,000. In Queensland the loss has reached almost two millions sterling. This huge loss is accounted for by the fact that in the interests of development remunerative rates are not charged on the Queensland system. That State prefers to make up the loss in various directions. The policy can, of course, be carried too far. Queensland carries it to such an extent that its Railway Department made that extremely heavy loss last year. If remunerative rates are not charged, naturally the ratio of working expenses must go up. If in this State everything was carried at rates corresponding to the wheat rate, for instance, our ratio of working expenses would rise considerably. No doubt it is popular to carry articles at unremunerative rates and let the Treasury make up the loss. Everybody so benefited is, of course, highly satisfied. In comparing our system with other systems, it must be borne in mind that Western Australia is never likely to get into the position in which South Australia and other States find themselves, because the regeneration of our lines and rolling-stock is carried on all the year round. If by some accident a truck is smashed or an engine broken up, the replacement is made out of revenue. When we put down 60-lb. rails where 45-lb. rails existed, the cost of the 60-lb. rails is not debited to the Railway Department's capital account; we deduct the value of the 45-lb. rails originally put in, and merely debit the difference to capital account. Re-sleepering is proceeding continuously on our system, and the cost is being met out of revenue; and the same remarks apply to the tramway system. The Railway Department spend at least £50,000 yearly on re-laying and re-sleepering.

Hon. G. Taylor: From revenue?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. On rolling-stock, too, we spend a consider-

able amount of money every year to keep it up to proper condition. Under our Act a certificate must be given by the officer in charge that the system is being maintained in a proper state of repair, and that certificate has to be presented to Parliament. The sources of railway revenue for last year included local coal £119,000, wheat £404,000, and local timber £423,000. The last figure is hardly familiar to people generally. We talk about the wheat harvest and its effect on railway revenue, but the earnings from timber traffic are greater than those from the transport of wheat.

The Premier: And not only is the total greater, but the percentage of profit is greater.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I never tell anybody about percentages of profit made by the railways, because if I do so the persons concerned immediately demand reductions.

Mr. Lindsay: The figures for the timber industry apply inside the State as well as to export, but the Government do not accept train loads of timber within the State.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Twenty or thirty full train loads of sleepers have been taken to Meekatharra during the past year. The hon. member is not quite right. We often have all but full train loads of timber moved from the timber districts to Bunbury for export. I may point out that it is only lately wheat transport has reached its great dimensions.

Mr. Thomson: The special train loads for Meekatharra were for the Horseshoe extension.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Every year new railways are being built and full train loads of sleepers are carried for them. This year two or three lines will be constructed, and that fact will mean so much additional timber traffic for the Railway Department. Other sources of railway revenue for the past year included the following:—Miscellaneous traffic, such as road material for instance, £134,000; general goods, £528,000; live-stock, £140,000; passenger and parcels traffic, £981,000. I may mention here that while our Railway Department show a good financial return, that return is not obtained at the cost of the users of the railways, seeing that our rates compare favourably with railway rates anywhere in the world, and

assuredly with rates anywhere else in Australia. In this morning's paper I saw a favourable comparison drawn between Western Australian passenger fares and those now ruling in the United Kingdom. Everyone knows that the value of money, the purchasing power of money, is considerably greater in the United Kingdom than in Western Australia; and therefore if we can have passenger fares on a par with, or cheaper than, those existing at Home, we are putting up a very good job. In regard to almost every commodity that admits of comparison, freights on our system show up favourably as against freights obtaining anywhere else. Certainly our wheat rate is lower than the wheat rates of other Australian States.

Mr. North: It looks as if the narrow gauge is economical after all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, notwithstanding the hon. member's enthusiasm for the 4ft. 8½in. gauge.

Mr. North: I want that only for the sake of uniformity.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: So far it has proved an advantage to Western Australia to have its lands developed by lines of comparatively small capital cost. We are able to do for the producers of this State the service of railway transport in respect of all the commodities they want and all the commodities they produce, at a cheaper rate than that service is performed at elsewhere in Australia. Our super freight is, of course, lower than anywhere else in the world. Our wheat freight is about 3s. per ton cheaper than that of New South Wales on the average haul.

Mr. Mann: That fact is not likely to cause you to increase the rate, is it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. The Government have no desire to make the railways a taxing institution in any respect.

Mr. Kenneally: The member for Perth (Mr. Mann) is wondering why you are not bringing your wheat rate up to the New South Wales level.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We want to do good service to the Western Australian community at the cheapest possible cost; and the railway returns, during the past two or three years at any rate, have been sufficient to counteract the department's expenditure in performing that ser-

vice. While many people request and beg and importune that railway freights should be reduced on account of what are termed the indirect benefits which may result therefrom to the community, the Government consider that those benefits are highly intangible, and not to be got hold of; and provided that our rates are not a burden on any section of the community, there is no reason why any section should not bear the cost to which the State is put in rendering it services. The wheat transported by rail during last year totalled 663,000 tons, on which the freight amounted to £404,000. Those figures compare with approximately half a million tons and a freight of £300,000 for the previous year. The average distance wheat was hauled last year was 139 miles, or eight miles more than in the previous year. From this fact it will be recognised how the developments proceeding in the outer wheat lands are affecting railway transport. An interesting table showing the increase year by year will be found appended to the Commissioner's report, and therefore I shall not deal with that aspect here. As regards the transport of this season's harvest, hon. members may have noticed the Press report of a conference I had, the administrative officers of the Railway Department being in attendance, with the wheat acquiring agents in the Commissioner's office last Friday. Last year a similar conference was held. We then got the people together and told them exactly what we were going to endeavour to do, and we said to them, "Now you can make your arrangements accordingly for shipping that quantity of wheat. If you charter ships to come in at a greater rate than we can convey wheat to the coast, you will be doing it with your eyes open and what occurs will be your own funeral. On the other hand, after the Railway Department have told you their limit of capacity in wheat haulage, you can make your shipping arrangements accordingly, and the department will keep up to what they have promised." Last year the department undertook to transport, and did transport, wheat at the rate of 260,000 bags per week either to mills or to various ports of shipment. That is good. I think the Leader of the Opposition will agree with me that, having undertaken this season to carry 300,000 bags weekly, an increase of 40,000 bags, it will be excellent if we carry it out.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Railway Department can do it if you just let them alone.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think the Leader of the Opposition will agree that departments cannot be left altogether alone. It is not always in the best interests of a department to be left entirely alone.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Business concerns must be managed in a business way.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Business concerns too must have some consideration for the effect of their policy on the general welfare of the community at large. It is necessary for the man in charge of the administration of the department, the man who is responsible to the country, to exercise some influence, so that the general community will benefit to the utmost extent possible.

Mr. Mann: Is it a fact that some exporters pay the longer haulage to Fremantle rather than be faced with excessive charges at the outer ports, such as Bunbury?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: On occasions, when they could not get expeditious handling for their wheat, they have preferred that it should come to Fremantle.

Mr. Mann: Are the handling charges heavier at the outer ports than at Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, they are practically uniform at all ports. In relation to the improvement this year of transporting an extra 40,000 bags of wheat weekly, I may inform the Committee that the truck supply is better than ever before. We have a considerable number of new 14-ton steel trucks, built in the Midland Workshops. The member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) has said something about importing railway stock, but I may say we are manufacturing all our own stock just as far as possible.

Mr. Lindsay: I hope the trucks will be suitable for bulk handling when it comes along.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think they will be. The matter was mentioned at the recent conference. I feel sure those trucks will be found suitable for bulk handling. We are increasing the number of trucks by an average of 10 per week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have about 12,000 trucks in all?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. Griffiths: I thought you said before it was 10,000 you had.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are increasing our trucks by 10 per week, and I feel sure that rate will be maintained, if not actually improved.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have a good many more miles of railway to cover.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: During the last five years the average daily mileage of the trucks has increased by four miles. Last year, over the whole year each truck in the system did an average of 24 miles per day, as against the 20 miles of five years ago. In some of our busiest months we have got as much as 28 miles and 29 miles as the average per day for each truck in the system. That improvement has been brought about through the reduction of grades, the relaying of lines with heavier rails, deviations, the establishment of staff stations, and the general improvement of the system. For these and other things the Treasurer has had to find the money. All these improvements equal about 2,500 extra trucks. That is to say, if we were doing only the same mileage as we were doing five years ago, it would take 2,500 more trucks to do the business we are doing to-day. So while our trucks have not been very greatly increased in number, the work we can do with what we have has been immensely increased.

Mr. Griffiths: The regrading has been a big factor in that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and so, too, has been the relaying of certain lines with heavier rails. We have now 60lb. rails from Northam to Wyalecatchem, and also on the Wongan Hills line. We could put on engines that would carry 35 per cent. more over those roads.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The laying of 80lb. rails to Northam has made a big difference.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, it has. All our engines can run over the 60lb. rails. We have not any extra large engines for running over the 80lb. rails.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Still, the heavier the rail the better.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, for the engine can travel at greater speed and give better service generally. On the Collie line the regrading work, which cost only some £6,000, has enabled us to increase the load by 15 per cent.

Mr. Withers: The work paid for itself in the first 12 months, did it not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not yet 12 months since it was done, but it is estimated that it will pay for itself within the first 12 months. Moreover, it has had this effect: So congested was the Collie line that trains were running over it for the whole of the 24 hours. We can now take an additional 15 per cent. of load, equalling about 700 tons daily, by the same engine power, without having to increase the number of trains. However, I do not wish to dwell upon that, because it has been fully reported in the Press and members, of course, have seen the report. During the past 12 months there has been considerable dissatisfaction over the provision of tarpaulins. We have now 2,000 extra, equivalent to an increase of 30 per cent., so there is very little occasion for complaint on that score. At Esperance there was considerable difficulty over the handling of wheat. Now, instead of having horses on the jetty, we have strengthened the structure and put on a locomotive, which will do the work very much better than the horses could.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Esperance, of course, will require a good deal of expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The present shipping accommodation at Esperance is entirely inadequate for the export of agricultural commodities in any great quantity. I am afraid that before long we shall have to face some capital expenditure on the jetty and also on the improvement of the harbour.

Hon. G. Taylor: That will mean pretty heavy expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It will come up for discussion on the Loan Estimates. It is not dealt with at all by the Railway Department. All that we have done at Esperance has been to strengthen the jetty and provide a locomotive to do the work very much quicker than the horses were doing it previously. The working expenditure for the current year has been £2,900,000, as against £2,684,000 last year, or an increase of nearly a quarter of a million. The major portion of this increase will go towards earning the estimated increase of revenue, while another portion of it will go to meet long service leave and other additional expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is the long service leave going to cost us?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Just as much as the Treasurer can be induced to make available. It is estimated that it will mean an expenditure of £35,000.

Hon. G. Taylor: That will not bring up the arrears.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would if we could let the men off as fast as we could wish. The long service leave did not come into operation until last week, and already four months of the year have gone. Moreover, we are facing the busiest period of the year and, in consequence, we cannot let as many men go off on leave as we could desire.

Hon. G. Taylor: As you let one section off, you have to put on other men.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There are not many jobs from which the men can be let off just now.

Hon. G. Taylor: At all events, you have to pay the men while they are away on leave, and pay others in their places.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In the busy season we require exceptionally capable men, trained to do the work. When the busy season finishes we cannot say to those men, "We do not want you any more, but perhaps next year we shall be able to give you a job again." These men have not sufficient work to keep them fully occupied all the time, but they have to be paid just the same, else we could not run the railway system.

Mr. Sampson: The men could take their holidays in the slack time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, under the union's agreement, registered in the Arbitration Court, the holidays have to be spread over the year.

Mr. Kenneally: Why should all the workers be compelled to take their holidays in the winter time, which is the slack period?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Last year the staff numbered 8,800. This year shows an increase of about 800 on the previous year. The proportion of salaries and wages is much about the same, and so, too, is the proportion of expenditure. Therefore we are not getting ahead of the requirements of the system by putting on too many people to deal with railway transport.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have not had very satisfactory results from the increase in staff.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member had been in the Chamber when I was comparing the system with other Australian railways, I think he would have

agreed that our system is entirely satisfactory.

Hon. G. Taylor: But the railway systems of the other States have been suffering as the result of bad seasons.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Possibly they are now suffering, but the figures I quoted from the Eastern States were those of last year, which was not a bad season. If we were to take their railway figures for this year, and compare them with our own, the result would be still more striking. It indicates that we are giving to the people a better service at a cheaper rate than is to be found elsewhere in Australia. We are not making a bad job of it. I do not say our system cannot be improved, for it is constantly being improved. It is necessary for us to continue to concentrate on the economical working of the railway staff. For instance, during the past three years each individual has had his remuneration increased by at least 8s. a week. All that has to be paid for, and as a matter of fact it has been paid for. There have been no increases in railway freights during that period; in many instances there have been decreases. In addition to the trucks to which I have already referred, we are also building 25 covered trucks, seven brake-vans, two suburban coaches and what the member for Gascoyne is particularly interested in, 10 two-berth sleeping coaches to be used on the Perth-Kalgoorlie line. These coaches will effect a very desirable and desired improvement in our passenger accommodation. The change from the trans train of two-berth compartments to our train of four-berth compartments does not create very favourable comment. Our desire is to keep up to date with regard to the railway system and that is why we are now proceeding to build these more commodious coaches. Those members who had experience of similar two-berth carriages on the occasion of the recent visit to the Midland Company's areas will appreciate the benefit that travellers will gain when the coaches are in service.

Mr. North: I suppose it will be some time before they are ready.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They should be ready in about 12 months' time. Whilst we can set out a programme in connection with the building of trucks for 12 or 18 months ahead, that cannot be done with locomotives. Our programme for locomotive construction will extend over a period of three years. We have had 10 built

already in the Midland workshops, and we have undertaken the construction of another five. When these are completed, a commencement will be made with another 10. It takes a considerable time to build trucks and locomotives in our workshops, but by getting on with the programme early we hope to be able to keep abreast of our requirements. There is the outstanding advantage that the rolling stock is being built in Western Australia by Western Australian people. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) will be interested to learn that a considerable number of apprentices are being taught the trade of engineering as the result of our policy of locomotive construction. Whilst the cost is estimated to be a little more than that of the imported article, I think that when the final figures come out we shall not be so very far ahead of the cost of the locomotives imported from other parts of the world. The regeneration of the rolling stock has been responsible for the saving of £45,000. The regeneration consists of introducing superheating arrangements, and generally improving the locomotives.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Only £45,000 saved during all these years?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, only in the last year or two. The application of the super-heating has been going on for some years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It has always been going on.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With the new engines that have been built and are being built at Midland Junction and the regeneration that is going on, we shall save £45,000 this year. This information can be found in the report of the Commissioner. "P" class engines cost 22d. per train mile to run and they take a 25 per cent. greater load than the engines previously used, the cost of running which was 41d. It will thus be seen that the train mileage cost is down to nearly half and we carry a 25 per cent. greater load. By adopting the policy I have outlined we shall be able to keep abreast of our work.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We shall be able to run them for nothing soon.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When the hon. member was Treasurer no doubt he would have carried out a similar programme had he been able to do so. There was every justification for doing so, but he is not to be blamed for not having raised the necessary money at that time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We bought 10 engines.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And we have built 10 engines at Midland Junction, which is better still.

The Premier: We paid for those 10 engines that you bought. You ordered them, and we found the money.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was the second 10.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Leader of the Opposition would not be justified in spending loan money on rolling stock while he had to pay £6 12s. 6d. per cent. interest. At the present time we are able to raise money under more favourable conditions. We are paying $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., and what it was impossible to do with loan money at $6\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., we are now able to do by raising money at the lower rate of interest. If the hon. member were in charge of the Treasury bench and he was able to raise money at $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., no doubt he would do just as the present Treasurer is doing. Each 1 per cent. on a million pounds raised represents £10,000, which is a considerable item. No one is to blame for the delay in increasing the rolling stock. With regard to the freight on super, which is usually discussed on the Railway Estimates, we are increasing each year the period during which the cheap rate applies. The railways in this respect have undertaken a heavy burden. The Leader of the Opposition says that we ought to be carrying it at a still cheaper rate, but the increase in the quantity being used is carried over the railways without assistance from the Treasury. When the increase goes up to the extent of 30,000 or 40,000 tons, as it has done during the past three or four years, and when it is remembered that the railways are sustaining a loss of 1d. per ton per mile on the 10,000 tons carried, it will be appreciated what the loss is likely to be when the quantity carried reaches 200,000 or perhaps 250,000 tons.

Mr. Mann: But you get it back in wheat freights.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course we get value for all these things in an indirect way, but still, there is the loss, when such a great proportion of the railway business has to be carried on at an unremunerative rate. I am not saying that it is not desirable in the interests of the State that super should not be carried at a cheap rate. If the Minister for Agriculture were here, he would, perhaps, say that it would pay the State to carry super for nothing.

Superphosphate certainly has a tremendous effect on the development of the agricultural and pastoral industries. That is admitted. The consequences, however, have to be borne by the Railway Department. But whilst it may not be a very important item when the transport of super amounts to about 170,000 tons, it does become a serious matter when the quantity to be carried is one and a half times, or perhaps twice, as great. It will then be a heavy burden for the Railway Department to carry. Fortunately, we have been able to continue to carry super. at the cheap rate, notwithstanding the increased tonnage. We have not only the increased tonnage, but, as with the wheat, we have to transport it further. The traffic is going further and further out in the agricultural areas and consequently the loss must become greater. We have not only additional tonnage, but additional mileage. The mileage has increased by about 8 per cent., and the tonnage has increased between 10 and 20 per cent. in each year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not such a great increase in mileage, surely!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and the Commissioner's report will bear out what I say. The average haul for super. is eight miles greater than it was a couple of years ago.

Mr. Thomson: Look at the development that has taken place.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course, but the hon. member must recognise that carrying this commodity at an unremunerative rate makes it difficult for the Railway Department.

Mr. Griffiths: When electroculture is in operation it will be possible to do without a lot of superphosphate.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Last year the average haul was 151 miles for each ton; the year before it was 144 miles—an increase of seven miles.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Six miles point something.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, let us say approximately seven miles. The ton mileage went up from 24 to 28. It will thus be seen that the increased burden has become considerable. Last year our superphosphate traffic was 15 per cent. greater than that of the year before.

Mr. Thomson: And I hope it will be greater this year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I hope so, too, but it is just a question of

what is going to happen with the superphosphate traffic. It is admittedly unsatisfactory to the superphosphate manufacturers, to the farmers, and to the Railway Department to have different rates applying during various periods of the year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why not apply the cheap rate throughout? So long as you have wheat to haul back, what does it matter?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would mean a further loss of between £13,000 and £14,000 on the super traffic.

Mr. Sampson: The same thing could apply in the fruit and potato districts.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Those districts have received great concessions at the expense of the rest of the State, and they have not been disturbed.

Mr. Thompson: And we don't want to disturb them either.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. Everyone would agree to carry super. for nothing if only we could do it, but to haul it throughout the whole year under those conditions would mean a reduction of at least £15,000 in the railway revenue. Certainly we are all anxious to encourage the use of super. throughout the agricultural districts of Western Australia. I noticed in the Press that the price of superphosphate this year will be 2s. 6d. per ton less within the State. If the people who use super. are prepared to pay an extra 6d. per ton on super., that will mean an additional amount of £5,000 net to the railways and we would then lose between £8,000 and £9,000 on that class of business. If that were agreed to we could, in my opinion, in all probability haul super. all the year round at the flat rate. I do not know whether that proposal would appeal generally to the producers of the State. I believe it would be of considerable advantage to them and would obviate the rush that takes place during the peak periods of the year. I think the Premier was with me at Southern Cross on one occasion when a man said he had kept out of production 1,000 acres because he would have had to pay the increased price on his super. requirements. That was the attitude he adopted, because he had to pay the extra freight as he had not been able to secure his supplies during the time the cheaper rates were operating.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: It was just as well that he did, because he would have been too late.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: If he was not able to take advantage of the cheap rate period, he must have been too late.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, he would have had time to put in his crop. Hon. members know that every year when the period during which the cheap rates apply has expired, there are always some who happen to be left out, and that causes grave dissatisfaction. The unfortunate part of it is that many of the people who cannot make their financial arrangements early are those who are not able to take advantage of the cheap rates. The people I refer to are the poorer type of settlers who are without appreciable financial resources. They are not able to make arrangements until late in the season and consequently cannot send in their orders. Thus they find themselves left out in the cold and are forced to pay the higher rates.

Mr. Thomson: The trouble, too, is that some of the farmers do not receive their orders in rotation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: All I can say is that all the superphosphate firms say they are prepared to deliver orders in rotation as they receive them. Not sufficient time, however, is given to some farmers to make their financial arrangements, and those people cannot forward their orders until March or later.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course there was a shortage of trucks last year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There has always been a shortage.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We know that many went out empty.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The fact remains that there will always be a shortage. No one will seriously assert that we can transport 200,000 tons of one commodity during a brief period in such a way that every farmer can get his superphosphate supplies between the 20th March, say, and the 20th April. If that could be done, everyone would be satisfied, but no railway system such as ours could possibly handle such freight in the course of a comparatively few days. No matter what happens regarding the freights, whether they be cheap or dear, the transport of superphosphate must be spread over a period of four or five months.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: I think you are going to increase your difficulties by the establishment of further industries in the metropolitan area.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: I think you will.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government will give every encouragement to people to establish factories in other than the metropolitan area. For instance, there is a block of land in the Geraldton district that was held for railway purposes. That has been made available to a superphosphate manufacturer so that he can establish his works there. But there are certain difficulties that I will not discuss at the present moment. If such factories are established in the outer districts and at centres such as Esperance, Bunbury, Albany and Geraldton, there can be no reason why the Railway Department should be expected to cart superphosphate at unremunerative rates to districts where those works are established.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is a perfectly reasonable contention, so long as the quality and price of the superphosphate are the same as exist now.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members should realise that a truck used for the conveyance of superphosphates from Perth to Esperance, for instance, will be away from the yards for about five or six weeks, and for that the Railway Department is recouped at the rate of 14s. per ton only. That return may be effected, of course, if there is some back loading obtained along the line. Naturally, the time when the farmers want their superphosphate is the busy period for the railways. However, I advance that proposition to the producers of the State and if the proposal is agreed to, we can then have superphosphate hauled all the year round at the one rate, which will represent an increase of 6d. per ton. If a farmer were using 20 tons of superphosphate, it would cost him 10s. extra, and the Railway Department will face a certain loss of between £8,000 and £9,000 in giving effect to that policy.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I don't suppose anyone will object to that if you stick to it.

The Premier: The increase will be slight to each individual farmer.

Mr. Thomson: You suggest the flat rate to apply all the year round without any alteration of rates at all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. It will not impose any considerable burden on the producers, because the price of super is to be reduced by 2s. 6d. per ton.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If the price of wheat goes up 6d. a bushel, you will not seek to take that as well.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. We desire to convey wheat as cheaply as possible over the railways. I do not know whether the offer I make will be acceptable to the producers. This year the period during which the cheap rate will operate will be stated at the beginning of the year and there will be no extension or any alteration, whatever may happen. If we say that the cheap rate for the hauling of superphosphate will last till the 15th April, that will be the date. If we say it will be to the 31st March, the concession will cease on the 31st March.

Mr. Mann: Your heart may melt in the end.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It will be useless endeavouring to bring pressure upon the Government to extend the period for a few days. Everyone will know at the commencement of the transport season the time during which they can take advantage of the cheap rates.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course every additional acre makes it more difficult to forward supplies.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know what the manufacturers say. If they cannot supply superphosphate, they claim it is the fault of the Railway Department because of the shortage of trucks. That is the fashionable thing to say.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That has been the explanation at times.

Mr. Latham: That was the trouble last year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: On many occasions it was not the fault of the railways last year. We had a considerable number of trucks at the superphosphate works, and they could not be loaded while they were there.

Mr. Griffiths: At any rate it is the usual excuse.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Please God you will have to send out thousands of tons more than you did last year. That is a thing you should applaud, not deplore.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who is deploring it?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Has the Leader of the Opposition just awakened? Throughout my remarks I have endeavoured to show that the pastoral and agricultural industries could not carry on

successfully without the use of superphosphate and that the more we encourage its use the greater will be the prosperity and productivity of the State. Every inducement we can give to encourage the use of superphosphate will be given by the Government. We will be only too ready and anxious to assist in every way possible. There always has been trouble about superphosphate supplies and the period during which the cheap rate applies.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: And there always will be trouble.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Railway Department and the Treasurer are prepared to make the reduction I have indicated if the proposal be agreed to. It is to the advantage of the producers to pay the flat rate I have suggested, even if they have to pay a little extra in railway freights.

Mr. Lindsay: I think it is a very good idea.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Wherever I have gone throughout the State and talked about the cheap-rate period with the producers, they tell me that they agree with the position. Unfortunately politics finds its way into matters concerning Government administration—politics should not enter into such questions, but unfortunately it does—and so if 6d. is added to the rate we are apt to hear about it later on. For instance, there was the vermin tax. During the last election that was used for political purposes and the attitude of some people was, "These are the cows who put on the increase!"

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: You will not experience that in this instance.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is regrettable that politics have reached a low level. Where a sensible business arrangement can be made to suit all concerned, politics should be kept out of it altogether.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is quite right; it applies to roads and everything else as well.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I will leave it at that. On both sides of the House are members representing agricultural constituencies. They can look into the proposal I have made, and if they and those they represent are prepared to deal with the question along those lines, we will consider it.

Mr. Sampson: You have not dealt with the question of headlights on engines.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Headlights have been fitted to 100 engines.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And there are complaints about them. What are required are lights that can be seen a hundred yards or so away, not two miles away. Some are like searchlights.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I shall now deal with the tramways. The estimated revenue for the year is £312,000 and the estimated expenditure £255,500, leaving a balance of £56,500. Of that amount £50,000 will be absorbed in interest, and the estimated profit is £6,500. As compared with last year, the results will be worse by about £20,000. Taking the revenue figures, it is estimated that we shall get £17,000 more by way of earnings on new lines opened, but the additional expenditure will mean that we shall be no better off than last year. However, the policy observed by the Railway Department is also observed by the Tramway Department in that we keep the tracks and overhead gear in good condition.

Mr. Mann: Do not say too much about the tracks!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member asked a question to-day regarding the tracks, and the answer indicated that there has been some activity in renewing them.

Mr. Mann: You started it, but you have stopped half way.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No, if there is any blame, the major portion rests with the City Council. We contracted to get a fairly large quantity of stone, but could not get it when we required it. There was considerable activity in road-making both with the City Council and with the Government. Naturally, when we undertook a fairly comprehensive programme, it was not easy to get a large quantity of material at once. The hon. member was as insistent as most people that any work which could be put in hand to relieve unemployment should be put in hand. We need not have undertaken the tramway work until now, when the metal would have been available, but we had to provide work for unemployed at the time. It is better to cause inconvenience to a few people riding around the city than to have hundreds of men out of work.

It is certainly the lesser of two evils. The cost of the work has not been debited to loan. An amount of £21,000 is provided out of revenue each year for the relaying of tracks, so that the capital value may be maintained. During the year we relaid tracks in Newcastle-street, Bulwer-street, Fitzgerald-street, and Hay-street from Hill-street eastwards. There still remains some relaying to be done. I think the Nedlands track will have to be attended to this year, and in several other parts the track is getting into bad order, and will have to be renewed before long.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is expensive work.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is rather unfortunate that during the years when the department were making a profit, sufficient revenue was not paid into a reserve fund to permit of the tracks being kept in proper condition. During the time the tramways were making a profit the tracks were almost worn out, and yet the profit was taken into revenue. Now the Government have to find money from revenue to put the tracks in order. It is difficult to keep the system in repair. It must be remembered that though the trams were started 27 years ago, the fare in most instances remains the same. On most of the lines a 3d. section only is charged, and a 3d. section was charged 27 years ago, when wages and working costs were about half of what they are to-day. We have not found it necessary to increase the fares. I think ours is the only system in Australia that still retains some penny fares. In no other capital city in the Commonwealth can one ride on a tram and leave it without losing more than a penny. While we have no desire to increase fares, if costs go on increasing, the fares will have to be revised. The tracks and the cars are being kept in good repair by means of the £21,000 provided out of revenue each year. The revenue of the electricity supply is estimated at £250,000 and the expenditure at £192,500. Of the balance of £57,500, interest payments are expected to be £50,000, which will leave a surplus of about £7,500.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have to provide a sinking fund for all those things.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and at the same time keep the asset up to its proper value. In fact, I think it has increased in value. When the loan is paid

off by the sinking fund, the people will be better off because the asset is being kept in proper order.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Premier is very pleased with that explanation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Premier is doing a wonderful lot for posterity, and posterity may perhaps remember it, not that that will do the Premier much good. The revenue of the electricity supply last year was £221,221 and this year it is expected to be £250,000. The use of electricity is becoming more and more popular with the general public, and with the natural increase of consumption the revenue should reach the estimated figure. Expenditure is estimated at £20,500 more than last year, due to maintenance of additional lines, cost of generating additional current, and cost of long service leave to staff. Interest is set down at £50,000, an increase of approximately £8,000, due to the fact that new plant will be taken over during the current year. Last year the undertaking sold 54 million units, and the figures this year will be approximately 60 million units. Those figures give some idea of how the consumption has grown. During the last four or five years the consumption of electrical current generated by the East Perth plant has at least doubled. The only fly in the ointment is that we have to fulfil the agreement with the City Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You took the tramways percentage from them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am referring to the electricity supply. We undertook to supply electricity to the City Council at a very low figure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I thought you were referring to the payment to them of a percentage of the earnings.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The City Council, under the agreement, receive current at the rate of .75d. per unit and they are taking more than half of the current generated. It costs the Government .95d. to generate it, a difference of one-fifth of a penny per unit. On each of the 24 million units sold to the City Council, the undertaking loses one-fifth of a penny, which represents £24,000 a year. That in itself would not be so serious if the figure was stationary, but like the superphosphate traffic that we were discussing this afternoon, the consumption of electricity is increasing each year. The City Council are on a good wicket in the matter of the price

they pay for the current and the price at which they sell it. I understand they are making £20,000 a year out of it. They are advertising the use of electricity extensively. No one desires that the use of a up-to-date method for lighting, cooking and power purposes should be restricted, but it is unfortunate for the people of the State that so much of the East Perth output has to be sold at a loss of one-fifth of a penny per unit. At present the loss is £24,000 a year, but if the increase in the use of electricity continues as in the last four or five years, the Government in eight or ten years' time will be losing £50,000 a year.

Mr. Sampson: Does the cost of generation remain the same, notwithstanding the increase?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As a result of the installation of the new unit we may be able to decrease the cost of production. We shall have one 12,500 unit plant operating as against three small units of 4,500 each, and it is expected that the cost of production will be reduced.

Mr. North: It is very unfair that other consumers should have to pay more.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member has a grievance in that his constituents have to pay a rate that will provide a profit to counteract the loss sustained under the agreement with the City Council.

Mr. Mann: You should bear in mind that the City Council abandoned their electric works.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We bear in mind that we have to continue day after day, week after week and year after year to supply increasingly large quantities of current at an absolute loss.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was a very stupid agreement.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The agreement would not have been stupid had it been made for a comparatively short term. It would not have been so stupid had a saving clause been inserted to provide an increase in proportion to the increased cost of coal. Coal is the main factor in production, representing as it does about .55d. per unit. I think Collie coal is now costing more than double as compared with the price when the agreement was made. The worst of it is the agreement has 30 odd years to run.

Hon. G. Taylor: The more current you sell, the more you lose.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. The Premier reminds me that when the agreement was made we were paying 3s. 6d. for coal, whereas the price now is 12s.

Mr. Davy: Do you think we ought to pay 12s.?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When the hon. member buys a suit of clothes, he has to pay the price demanded by the people controlling the commodity.

The Premier: You might go to the tailor next door, but we cannot go to the coal mine next door.

Mr. Davy: I understand a new coal mine is being opened up now.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Whatever mine may be opened up, it will not make much difference to the price of coal. During the last 15 years the price of coal has been continually increasing, and I do not know whether it is stationary even now. Of course, the loss on current generated for the City Council is not all recovered from the people of Cottesloe.

Mr. North: No, but they pay their share.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have to make up some of the loss by charging the tramways for current at 1.25d. per unit, though we are supplying current to the City Council at .75d. In that there is something of poetic justice because, while the ratepayers have to pay the Government a little more for the tramway service, they get it back from the City Council in the shape of cheaper current. But they do not get it very cheaply. The City Council make £25,000 profit and the money is used on recreation gardens and other things. In that way the ratepayers are saved a certain amount of taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why worry about it?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The money comes out of a concern which is under the control of the Government, and goes into one that is outside of Government control. We lose £25,000 and the City Council gain it. The ratepayers generally get the benefit, inasmuch as the City Council make that profit out of electricity. If the municipality did not make that profit the ratepayers would have to find the money by direct rates. Each of the three undertakings on these Estimates is expected to make a profit this year, and each is in a satisfactory financial position. So far as maintenance is concerned, each has been kept up to

standard, and there is no reason to fear that the Estimates which have been put forward will not be realised.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.46]: I should like to refer to one or two things that have happened in connection with the railway system. The earnings for the year 1918-19 were £1,878,000. Last year the actual revenue was £3,574,000. In seven years the revenue has almost doubled. It is estimated that the earnings this year will be actually doubled. Transport is life. It shows, as nothing else shows, that a country is progressing. The operations in 1922 showed a loss of £257,000. We have invested enormous sums of money in these public utilities. It is due to bad times that we have built up a deficit, due to the war and the aftermath of the war, due to so many of our men leaving the State and to progress being stopped for the time being, and also due to the fact that we laid down many railways without peopling the country adjacent to them. Quite apart from the sinking fund, which represented £120,000, we lost £257,000 in 1922. In 1924 we showed a profit of £142,000, an improvement of £399,000 in those two years, in the working of the railways, thus transforming an enormous deficit into a substantial credit. The earnings for those two years increased by only £400,000. The result was a wonderful one. The year 1924 was the last year during which this party occupied the Treasury bench. The next two years produced anything but satisfactory results. The profits became a deficit of £31,950. We actually went back £174,000 in those two years, with increased earnings representing £109,000. In the management of these concerns we must exercise care. No one can say that the comparison between those periods is at all favourable. It is true that last year, with considerably increased earnings, we made a profit of £34,000, but that does not approach the profit of £140,000 in 1924. That is due to the fact that our working expenses increased between 1924 and 1927 by £49 per mile worked, while the earnings increased £26 for each mile of railway worked. We cannot go on at that rate.

The Minister for Railways: The hon. member put up fares and freights. Anyone can do that. That is easy.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course we put up fares and freights, and we

put up wages too as they have never been put up since. I will read the figures.

The Minister for Railways: I will read to you what happened in regard to wages.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The increases since have been moderate as compared to the increases given during those years. The men had no increase during the war and did not ask for it. They received a substantial increase just after I assumed office. They received more than they will ever get again, and certainly much more than they have had since the present Government took office. There is always an explanation. The Minister would be quite justified in making an explanation if he desired to do so. The result is not satisfactory.

The Minister for Railways: It is satisfactory to the producers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The position is due to several reasons, which are set out in the report. The document explains the increased costs. It says this is due to the shortening of hours, which have cost a considerable amount of money. There have been some increases in wages, but they do not account for the total difference in the results achieved. We can only take the figures from the printed returns. We take them and ask the public to have some regard for them. In connection with these great investments we must exercise care. The public are entitled to know what has happened in these years. We have heard a great deal about superphosphate freights. Apparently the Minister is anxious to make a bargain. If he will submit his offer we will seriously consider it. It is extraordinary that with the increase of 20,000 tons in the super carried, the increase in freight should be £11,000. The average freight is about 6s. per ton, whereas in comparison with the increased tonnage we have a freight of something like 11s. per ton. We would be better off if we had a freight that applied all the time. It was right to expect the farmer to take his super when the wheat was coming down to the port, so that we could get backloading for the trucks. That was the only justification for asking that the super should be carried at a cheap rate, namely, that it should be transported early. Owing to the enormous tonnage of wheat handled, the period over which it is transported has considerably lengthened. Last year we were bringing down thousands of tons long after the next

season's crops had been put in. The Minister said trucks were not available. At Northam I have seen hundreds of trucks going up empty at the time when superphosphates might have been carried in them, and yet we were told we could not get our super. Many people had to pay the higher rate, which was very unfair as so many others paid the lower rate. The position was precisely the same during the time when the higher rates were being paid.

Mr. Griffiths: On the 1st July there were 15,000 bags at one siding not then railed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is always wheat to come down as late as June or July. The arrangement was made to suit the department. When the fertiliser had gone up the wheat would come back in the same trucks, but that arrangement was not continued when the conditions were altered. This year we shall be transporting wheat for about nine months.

The Minister for Railways: In view of the reduced estimate it should not take so long as that. The longer period was thought possible when the estimate was for 36,000,000 bushels.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think that estimate will be realised.

The Minister for Railways: The estimate has been reduced by the department to 33,800,000 bushels.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think we shall get the 36,000,000 bushels.

The Minister for Railways: At least 100,000 acres of crop are being cut for hay.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: More is being cut for hay, but that includes oats as well as wheat. The Minister will be transporting wheat to the end of June. There is no justification for increasing the freights against those who cannot get their fertiliser railed when they want it. No one wants fertiliser in June. The crop is in by that time. Farmers want their fertiliser from the end of March onwards, but they are not able to get it at that time. Many farmers who put in their orders early did not get their fertiliser in time to profit by the reduced freight.

The Minister for Railways: That would be the fault of the superphosphate companies, not of the Railway Department.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would not be the fault of the railways if they were prepared to supply the trucks, but if the department did not supply the trucks, though they sent them away empty, it would be their fault. I hardly believe they would

do that. A few people have been compelled to pay the high rate. That is not fair. We ought to be just to all. If the Minister were charged with driving a motor car without a license he would not like to be fined 10 times more than another person charged with the same offence.

Mr. Davy: Nor to be let off because he is the Minister for Justice.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am sure he would want justice done under those circumstances. It was not done when the freights were increased against a few people while others had the advantage of the lower rates.

The Minister for Railways: Do not forget that we extended the time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If farmers cannot get their super because the department has no trucks, or for some other reason, they should not be penalised. We should get fertiliser on to the land as cheaply as possible. It is a freight producer; it produces a great deal of the freight that the railways carry and a great deal in the way of fares. If it were not for the crops people would not travel, and all the machinery, upon which a high rate is paid to balance the super a little, would not be needed.

The Minister for Railways: There is a higher rate on machinery because one machine occupies a truck.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It does not matter if there are 40 pieces of machinery in a truck; people have to pay the high rate. The best freight agent is fertiliser.

The Minister for Railways: That is why we cart it at such a low rate.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The rate is higher than it used to be.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At one time it was carted for a farthing per ton per mile, without a minimum charge. When the first Labour Government came in the rates were put up, but they came down with the Wilson Government in 1916. I should like to see the freight fixed so that there is no question about it.

The Minister for Railways: That is desirable.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not suggest it should be increased, but it should be fixed. If it had to be increased slightly it would be better that all should be on the same footing.

The Minister for Railways: There is a similar rate in regard to fruit cases.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It has always been satisfactory when the department get more revenue.

The Minister for Railways: They lost two or three thousand a year on fruit cases.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In any event, producers ought to be encouraged in every possible way.

The Minister for Railways: Certainly.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If farmers use a better and cheaper fertiliser we shall get splendid results from the railways. All along the coast down to Albany the farmers must have fertiliser. I have just been in that district, and the growth of clover all along the railway is magnificent. Where a few years ago one sheep was carried to two acres, there may now be two or three sheep to one acre. Where a few years ago a man fed two or three cows rather badly, he may now feed 15 or 20 well on the same area, the land having been fertilised over a term of years. Our lands are short of phosphates. If we could apply super to uncleared bush land, paying results would be obtained. I hope every encouragement will be given to the farmers of the South-West and the wheat belt to use more fertiliser. That would pay even the Railway Department, because of increased passenger traffic and greater goods tonnage. The more people make, the more they spend; and the Minister will reap his harvest from a dozen different sources. Let the hon. gentleman encourage the use of fertilisers in any way he pleases. The general use of superphosphate in the South-West has only come into being since group settlement started, but day by day superphosphate is becoming more fashionable there, and so the demand increases. Superphosphate is a magnificent topdressing. A friend of mine said, "It is not seed the farmers want, but fertiliser." We shall avoid the necessity for buying two million pounds' worth of Eastern foodstuffs by allowing fertiliser to be carried cheaply over the railways.

The Minister for Railways: I do not object to carrying it cheaply.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I object to the rate on super being increased at any period of the year. There should be a fixed rate covering the whole year. Let us by every means in our power apply science to agriculture in this way. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) wants fertiliser for his people, who of course have not a great

distance to cart it, so that the rate does not make much difference to them. If light lands are to be farmed, much more superphosphate per acre will be needed. At Southern Cross I was astonished to find farmers using 25 or 30 lbs. of seed and 40 lbs. of super to the acre, with magnificent results. Fine crops were obtained from light dressings, but the farmers had to use super in order to get crops at all. Re-erection of buildings is in process at Southern Cross, whereas seven or eight years ago the town was being pulled down. It may be said that Southern Cross is being re-erected on a foundation of golden grain. I am glad the Minister is having new trucks built. If the mileage per day can be increased, that helps tremendously, but nevertheless we must have a larger number of trucks.

The Minister for Railways: Undoubtedly.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If wheat remains at 5s. per bushel, we shall increase our wheat yield much more speedily and more greatly than the Minister imagines. It is all a matter of price. With wheat continuing at 5s., we shall be putting in the plough at Northam and pulling it out at Southern Cross. On the other hand, if the price of wheat happens to fall, much land must go out of cultivation. But with wheat remaining at 5s. Western Australia will have an enormous production in a very few years, and therefore a much larger supply of trucks will be needed.

The Minister for Railways: There is continuous progress in that respect.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The progress will have to be much quicker and much greater. With wheat steady at 5s. our harvests will be such as the railways will not be able to haul without a greatly increased supply of trucks. I heard the other day of a man who put in 2,000 acres of crop and fallowed 4,000 acres of light land; and he made a start only in January last. That would not have happened but for 5s. wheat. At Southern Cross I saw the farm of a man who went out in February of last year, and he now has 4,000 acres of crop, the whole of the work having been done by him and his two boys. The present price of wheat is an encouragement to people to grow wheat on country which could not be used with wheat at 3s. 6d. We must get ready for what will result from wheat staying at 5s. We cannot get ready for it in a few months. My advice to the

Minister is to build a great number of new trucks. If the price keeps up, there will be no time to obtain trucks when the wheat is in the bags. Our railways do better than the railways of any other State, and we ought to be thankful that Colonel Pope is at the head of the system and that all the men connected with the department are working satisfactorily. I know the railway system fairly well from travelling all over the State, and I can certify that the men on the stations and along the lines generally are working well. That is the proper spirit, and produces some of the results I have mentioned. The engines imported from England have proved wonderfully satisfactory. We are now building engines of the same class here. Formerly we had not time to build them, and were compelled to import them. The Minister will have to build locomotives quickly.

The Minister for Railways: There is as much work in hand now as the shops will be able to complete in three years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Midland Junction shops cannot build enough locomotives, the Minister will have to import some. When Mr. Scaddan became Minister for Railways, some old locomotives were taken in hand at the shops and eventually they proved highly useful. We had to import machinery for the renovation of old engines. I suppose those I refer to were some of the first engines in Western Australia.

The Minister for Railways: No. They were American engines imported in 1902.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We must see to it that we have sufficient rolling stock. I am glad that the Minister is going to face the question of a fixed rate for super. We must have new railway lines too; but when we examine the question we find that about 3,000 miles of railway serve our agricultural districts, the remaining 1,000 being on the goldfields. Of the 3,000 miles, owing to the fact that we have adopted a system of loop lines, and owing to the further fact that we run on the coast at so many places, there are only about 2,600 miles serving the land; the remaining 400 miles is wasted in junctions. At Merredin the Minister said, there are five junctions. At Northam there are several, and I suppose there should be some more. Anyway, there are not more than 2,600 miles of effective railway in the wheat lands and on the coastline. The building of an

other 500 miles will cost a couple of million pounds, but will open up 8,000,000 acres. The world has not built railways to any extent since 1914. The world's food supplies to-day are shorter than they have ever been, and so we can safely build railways now. I should like to see without any delay provision made for another 500 miles of railway. The Agricultural Bank is no longer drawing on the Treasury to keep the bank going, and the money the bank is putting out is responsible for all that has happened to increase the railway earnings. We can improve the railway system by building new lines and so help the Commissioner to make the railways a profitable proposition. At Esperance we have taken over the line up as far as Norseman. The sooner the land along that line is thrown open, the better. The Minister has suggested that a jetty will have to be built at Esperance. Our job is to take the wheat to the nearest port at the cheapest rate. It will become a much easier job for the Commissioner if those dealing in wheat can be persuaded to use the outports more than they do. Fremantle will be more than ever congested this year, and Albany, a magnificent harbour with a great place for the storage of wheat, will be practically deserted. The Minister could get his trains through to Albany on a much shorter mileage than that to Fremantle. Bunbury will have a great deal of wheat, but could have a great deal more with advantage to the department. Geraldton, of course, is now an established wheat port. A few years ago the railways carried wheat to a small mill at Geraldton and could scarcely get enough to keep the mill going. Last year, by contrast, a million bags of wheat were shipped from Geraldton. That is the place to which all the wheat grown within 150 miles of the port should be taken. For my part I would consider the desirability of making a cheaper freight to the nearest port. That would be a fair thing.

The Minister for Railways: We give preference of trucks to those desiring to ship through the nearest port.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is not the way to do it. Of course under the zone system you get mighty little over the last few miles. Now that we are getting into big figures and that Fremantle is congested with shipping to carry away the wheat, I think we might consider the question of mak-

ing the freight fit the nearest port. Under our existing system probably one pays 3d. for the first 70 miles, and 1d. for the next 70 miles.

The Minister for Railways: It is not quite so cheap as that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Pretty nearly. I suppose wheat can be handled as cheaply at Bunbury or Geraldton as at Fremantle.

The Minister for Railways: Yes. But we have to consider the superphosphate and work the trucks in for back loading.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You take out 200,000 tons of superphosphate, and you bring back 800,000 tons of wheat. I shall be surprised if you do not have a million tons of wheat this year. So there will be plenty of back loading for your superphosphate trucks. I do not know that I need say much more, except to make a few remarks on the subject of long service leave. It is always much greater pleasure to me to take up figures that disclose, as these figures do, wonderful progress than to say what I ought to say in criticism of the Minister. So I find myself forgetting the Minister when pointing out the result of the work done by the men on the land, and at most I give the Minister a little advice about preparing for the future, advice of which he takes not the slightest notice.

The Minister for Railways: Oh, yes I do. We are already preparing for the next few years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The outlook three years ago was not anything like as good as is the prospect to-day. That is not because of anything that has happened in this State; rather is it the result of what has happened away from the State. First there is the world's shortage of food stuffs. Then there is the Empire's position. Britain must treat the whole of the Empire as one unit, and of course she must make special efforts to get us developed. We have to absorb a great many of her people, and she has to take a great deal of our food. There has been a marvellous change within a very few years, and I believe that the next few years will show a very much greater percentage result. Certainly if we be true to ourselves that result will be achieved. The Minister worries about his tramways, and his electricity agreement with the City Council. It was never thought that after making the agreement we were going to lose a lot of money because of the cheap

rate at which people would be buying the current, and that the Minister would be taking it back from them through another branch of departmental service. The trams make good the supply of electricity.

The Minister for Railways: To some extent. Anybody, besides the City Council, who uses electric current has to pay more for it because of the agreement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But they need not believe that but for the agreement they would get it at a very much cheaper rate than at present. Because of the bad agreement we made with the City Council, we are charging more on the trams than we otherwise would.

The Minister for Railways: We used to debit the tramways 1½d.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we did not sell to the City Council at .75d. per unit, we should charge the tramways less. It was at first a good agreement but, owing to changed circumstances, it has become a bad agreement. However, the benefit is still going to the people in some shape or other. I believe these departments also are well managed by those in authority. It is only right that we should acknowledge the good work done by the management. As to long service leave, the position is not satisfactory. I should like the Government to offer the men as an alternative the cost of long service leave, to be devoted to some fund established to provide for a retiring allowance.

The Minister for Railways: They were consulted about it, but they preferred long service leave.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think they were wrong.

The Minister for Railways: The younger men wanted long service leave, but the older men wanted a pension scheme.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They had better do the thing that is good for them.

Mr. Kenneally: There is no reason why they should not have both.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, none at all. Why have not the Government given them both long ago?

Mr. Kenneally: Because the hon. member, when Premier, did not give them even one.

Mr. Wilson interjected.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Now, there is the man who has put up the cost of running the railways. The member for East Perth said I did not give the men long service leave. Of course I did not. It could

not be done. Had I consented to promise I might have bought a great many votes. And, behaving like a scoundrel, I might have said, "I will give you long service leave, and then I might have failed them after getting their votes. They were promised long service leave 3½ years ago, and a week ago they got the first instalment of it."

The Minister for Railways: Who promised it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You did.

The Minister for Railways: I did not. The hon. member cannot show any utterance of mine in which I promised it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They were promised long service leave 3½ years ago, and they got the first of it a week ago. They voted on that promise 3½ years ago.

The Minister for Railways: I do not know that any member of the Government promised it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course it was promised. It was part of the policy of the Government.

The Minister for Railways: It was not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I say it was.

The Minister for Railways: Prove it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister will resign on my proving it, I will prove it. I remember that the Minister when sitting over there, moved a motion affirming long service leave.

The Minister for Railways: That did not say that I promised it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It said you believed in it.

The Minister for Railways: I certainly believed in it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member believes in it. Three and a half years ago he promised it, and last week the men got the first instalment of it. Eight months ago it was promised again.

The Minister for Railways: It was promised before the last elections, but that was the only time.

Hon. G. Taylor: No, it was promised 3½ years ago.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was promised a second time.

The Minister for Mines: They eventually got it and they would not have got it if you had remained in office.

Mr. Mann: They have not got it even now.

The Minister for Mines: They have got it. You surely did not expect us to give it to them in one day.

Mr. Mann: It will take ten years to give it to all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member cannot tell the people what would have happened if we had remained in power.

The Minister for Mines: I am not far out, anyhow. You have never found me wrong.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have been trying to find the Minister right. At the 1924 election I did say to the people that long service leave was promised and that it could not be granted. Things improved and in 1927 I told them they could have either a retiring allowance or long service leave. The people have had the opportunity to vote twice and they have returned the present Government twice.

Mr. Clydesdale: And will return them a third time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not if you get tin hares.

Mr. Clydesdale: Are you interested in tin hares?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, but the Railway Department are.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! These interjections must cease.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am glad you are ordering the interjections to cease. Members opposite are very anxious that I should not say what I wish to say on the subject of long service leave, which has been twice promised and which a week ago, was granted to the first individual.

Mr. Kenneally: And you are disappointed?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not.

The Minister for Mines: Very disappointed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should have been very sorry if any of those promises had been broken. Three years' delay is a long time, and it is about due to the Government to fulfil the promise they made so far back. Now we are told it is being fulfilled at the rate of £35,000 a year. Why, more than half of the railway men will be dead before their turn comes to receive long service leave.

The Minister for Railways: I said about £40,000 in eight months.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know that leave had accumulated in 1912 when the present Premier told the railway people

they could not have long service leave because it would cost £169,000. The same thing was told them in 1913. Now long service leave will cost £300,000 and the Government are expending £35,000 of it this year. Of course the leave is still accumulating every day. It is a sum that my friend the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) can work out—how long it will take these men to get their leave at the rate of an expenditure of £35,000 in eight months.

Mr. Kenneally: The member for East Perth in conjunction with the railway officers, has already worked it out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then how long will it take?

Mr. Kenneally: The information will be placed before you later on, if you want it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member who is drawing £600 a year to serve his country might at least give us this information if it is in his possession. I consider it will take a long time for 8,000 men in the railways to get their long service leave. Many of them have already served the necessary period and are entitled to it. Some have served nine years, some eight, some six and some five, and the accumulation in time will be so heavy that it will be hopeless to expect to meet the cost by spending £35,000 in each eight months.

The Minister for Railways: You cannot raise the expenditure to the extent of £100,000 in each year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then these men should have been told before the election that they could not get it.

The Minister for Railways: The men whom you say are anxious about it, are more than satisfied.

Mr. Withers: I wish the Leader of the Opposition had introduced long service leave when he was in power. I would have had the opportunity to enjoy it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member has a much better job now. I would like the Minister to tell us why we are voting the cost on these Estimates. If we approve of these Estimates, we shall be approving of long service leave. Why cannot we fix it up in a permanent way? If the House is willing to approve of the expenditure to enable ten men to get the leave, all must get it. Why do we want to go to the Arbitration Court to register an agreement which can last for only three years? The matter has nothing to do with the Arbitration Court. Why cannot we do it in a proper way?

Hon. G. Taylor: By an Act of Parliament.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, if you like. Such an Act would have my support.

The Minister for Railways: All industrial agreements embody such things, hours, wages, holiday pay.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Holiday pay, yes, but an agreement can be registered for a period of only three years. Is it fair that such a matter should rest on an agreement that has a currency of only three years. It will take three times three years for men who have just joined the service to become entitled to long service holiday. It is not doing the thing fairly. The men are being asked to make a sacrifice. This uncertainty is bad for them and for the department as well. If I were sitting on the other side of the House I would not permit the Government to do it in this way. I hope members opposite will see that it is done in the proper way and that it is not left to chance.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Do you suggest giving long service leave to all at the one time?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That could not be done.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Then what is the good of arguing the point?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We know that railway men have to serve a considerable period before they perform responsible duties.

Mr. Kenneally: That is always recognised in the wages paid.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course it is recognised. It would be better for those men who cannot easily be spared to even now ask the Government to arrange a retiring allowance rather than long service leave. That would be the decent and right thing to do. We are fooling the people when we tell them that they can have their leave, knowing full well that they cannot get away. Is that the way to treat men who serve us well?

The Minister for Railways: The railway men have got that which satisfies them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I doubt it, but in any case they have not got it yet.

The Minister for Railways: It will take 12 or 18 months to arrange matters so as to enable them to get away.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: My advice is that they will be better off, and the

country will be better off if they agree to accept a certain amount of money as a contribution to a fund that will provide something for them when they retire. This is a hard and cold world, and when a man retires at a fair age he wants something to fall back upon. The money they will get from the fund will be more helpful than all the long service leave that can be given them. We know that some cannot afford to make use of their leave. I do not suppose five per cent. of the adult males of this State ever take three or four months' holiday. I venture to say that the Minister himself has never had three or four months' holiday at a time.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If any of these people should take a long holiday, it will mean considerable expense. Not many of them will be able to afford it. It is not possible to travel cheaply in these days.

The Minister for Railways: You do not have to travel far to get a good rest. We don't propose to send them round the world.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course you do not. The Minister does not care a jot where they go.

The Minister for Railways: No, so long as they return to work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We would all be better off if we had more recreation leave but unfortunately we cannot have it. As these men are not going to get it, and have been fooled for three years and eight months, this is the time to do a fair thing.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think the hon. member is justified in making that statement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am justified.

The Minister for Railways: It is wrong, and not justified at all. The hon. member should withdraw his statement. The Government have fooled no one. That is absolutely and deliberately wrong.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I live in a town where there are many railway employees.

The Minister for Railways: And so do I.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I represent them, and I have a perfect right to speak for them as well as for the people of the State.

The Minister for Railways: The hon. member is absolutely misrepresenting the position when he says the Government fooled anyone.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I will withdraw that statement if the Minister desires and say that if that is just the best the Government can do for the men, and they are content with it, then the men will be content with anything.

The Minister for Railways: It is a long way better than anyone else did for them.

Mr. Davy: Will you let us have a look at the papers?

The Minister for Railways: Yes, we have not stopped anyone from looking at the papers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We should see about that in relation to the arrangements for registering this agreement. I hope the Minister will do the thing in a proper and decent fashion.

The Minister for Railways: We have done so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It has not been done in a decent fashion. Every three years it will be a great question at election time, as it has been at the last two elections. There is no doubt about that. It is not in the interests of the men themselves that there should be any uncertainty about it.

The Minister for Railways: There will be no uncertainty; it will be arranged and done.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It has not been arranged and has not been done.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, it has.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister must make some permanent provision for the railway men just as is done for the civil servants. Why should not the railway men have the same permanency and certainty about it as the civil servants have?

The Minister for Railways: And they have got it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In what way?

The Minister for Railways: In regulations.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The civil servants have their Act and the railway men should be treated in the same way. There should not be any less certainty about their position.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think there is.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Government have not done justice to the railway men in dealing with this question as they have. It is up to the Government to see that the promises they made are carried out.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: They have got what they asked for, and should be satisfied.

Hon. H. Millington: I think the railway men know their own business just as well as the Leader of the Opposition does.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have an idea it is my concern to do what I can for all sections of the people.

Hon. H. Millington: The railway men are more interested in this than you are.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course they are.

Hon. H. Millington: And they are pretty shrewd, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But in this instance they have been misguided.

Hon. H. Millington: I do not think they want the hon. member's advice when fixing up an agreement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know that they asked the hon. member for his advice at all.

Hon. H. Millington: I did not poke my nose into it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: As a matter of fact, the railway men will be right if they say they have been twice deceived and they will not be deceived a third time.

Mr. Marshall: You are a great fighter for the industrialists.

[*Mr. Panton took the Chair.*]

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.50]: We can congratulate ourselves on the satisfactory report in connection with the Railways Department. It is satisfactory to find that, after having to face increased costs in connection with the 44-hour week and the new basic wage, the railways have been able to show a small profit. I am prepared to say, however, that, to my mind, that profit is a fictitious one.

The Minister for Railways: Not at all.

Mr. THOMSON: My reason for saying that is to be found in Return No. 15 supplied by the Premier when he introduced his Estimates. That is the return relating to the Railways. It will be seen that in 1923-24 there was paid for renewals an amount of £827,333 out of revenue, and each year since

the present Government have been in charge of the department we find less has been paid out of revenue for renewals and more has been charged up to loan. From that point of view, therefore, I am wondering if the statement made by the Minister in all good faith is justified, particularly when we examine the figures. Although he showed a small profit of £35,000 that has been created by virtue of the fact that more and more of the expenditure has been charged to Loan Account and less and less to revenue.

The Minister for Railways: That is entirely wrong. The Railway Department's accounts are kept absolutely accurately.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not suggest they are not.

The Minister for Railways: The Government have nothing to do with the railway accounts. Do you suggest that the railway officers are cooking the accounts.

Mr. THOMSON: I did not suggest that at all.

The Minister for Railways: You suggested that items were charged up to loan instead of to revenue.

Mr. THOMSON: And that is borne out by the statistics.

The Minister for Railways: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. THOMSON: When the present Government took office in 1924 the Railway Department, for renewals and equipment, contributed out of revenue £827,333, whereas for the year 1926-27 the amount charged up to revenue under that heading was only £643,158.

The Minister for Railways: You cannot put that construction on the figures.

Mr. THOMSON: I can put no other construction on them. Prior to the present Government taking office, the amount charged against revenue under the heading of the capital cost of construction and equipment of lines that were open, amounted to £862,515. It was practically the same amount in 1922-23 but in 1923-24 it was reduced to £827,333. Then, in 1924-25, after the present Government had taken office, the amount was reduced to £798,050; in 1925-26 to £658,134; and in 1926-27 to £643,158. It may be a perfectly legitimate charge against revenue, but there are the figures submitted by the Premier. If the amounts payable each year for renewals and so forth have been reduced as I have indicated, it simply means that in the past more has been charged up against revenue and now more

is charged up against the Loan Account. In such circumstances it has been easy to provide such a balance sheet. Coming to the question of long service leave, the Minister said that no one would oppose it. I opposed it consistently.

The Minister for Railways: I said no one would repudiate it.

Mr. THOMSON: From conversations I have had with many railway employees, I know that if the Government had provided a superannuation fund it would have been more advantageous for the railway men.

Mr. Kenneally: Will the hon. member support the provision of a superannuation fund for the railway men?

Mr. THOMSON: For the same amount of money, most certainly I will support that in preference to the Government's long service leave proposals. Seeing that the average railway man has a wife and family the long service leave will be of little benefit to him. No Government employees are more favourably situated than are the railway men. On the whole their conditions are better. So far as I can judge, they are getting exactly the same basic wage as is paid to those who work in totally different conditions, in addition to which they are fortunate enough to have privileges regarding passes over the railways and so forth. I am not questioning that at all.

Mr. Kenneally: Perhaps that is why your party did not give the railway men their long service leave.

Mr. THOMSON: If the hon. member wants a discussion upon the methods adopted by the Government, I am prepared to assist him. I have consistently stated that in my opinion it would be more beneficial to provide a superannuation fund or retiring allowance for the men than long service leave.

Mr. Kenneally: Your party gave the men nothing at all.

Mr. THOMSON: Some people are so one-eyed and small in conception that they think other people cannot possibly do justice to any section. I can assure the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) that he is not the Alpha and Omega so far as the railway men's requirements are concerned. He may take a great deal of credit to himself, but there are a large number of men in the Railway Department who are level-headed and

sensible, and have ideas of their own regarding that phase of the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are not discussing the member for East Perth.

Mr. THOMSON: Then if that hon. member will cease interjecting, I will confine my attention to the Railway Estimates. I asked the Minister whether a ballot was taken among the employees in regard to this question.

The Minister for Railways: You know that was not done.

Mr. THOMSON: I may not know as much about it as the Minister, nor yet as much as the member for East Perth who claims to know so much about the railwaymen's requirements. I believe, however, that if the Minister had sought an expression of opinion from the employees by means of a ballot, he would probably have found that they were more favourably disposed towards a superannuation fund than to the long service leave proposal. If a man's eyesight becomes defective, he has to leave his position; when he reaches a certain age he has to retire from the service. In many instances that represents a great hardship. A man who has been working for wages all his life is seldom able to save sufficient to live independently. If the hon. member and those who are so keen to look after the interests of the railway employees had endeavoured to get the money applied as I have indicated, a majority of the employees would have preferred it.

Mr. Kennedy: They rejected the superannuation scheme.

Mr. THOMSON: I have the Minister's statement that they were not consulted about it.

The Minister for Railways: The unions were consulted about it.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course the unions were consulted!

Mr. A. Wansbrough: The unions took a vote.

Mr. THOMSON: There is a case awaiting the decision of the Arbitration Court as to whether wages shall be increased, and I venture to say that quite a number of men were hauled up to the court by the member for East Perth to give evidence.

The Minister for Railways: Hauled up!

Hon. G. Taylor: Yes, hauled up.

The Minister for Railways: Dragged up by the heels!

Mr. THOMSON: Those men, if spoken to privately, would admit that they were asking too much.

Mr. Kenneally: You are now trying to speak for the Arbitration Court.

Mr. THOMSON: No one knows better than the hon. member that the case he presented was far-fetched, and the rates asked for were in excess of what the men considered they were entitled to receive. It is useless for the hon. member to try to browbeat me. While I may not know as much as he about putting a case to the court, I probably know a great deal more than he does about the actual hardships that people suffer. I cannot congratulate the Government on the way in which they granted long service leave to the railway men. Three years ago the Government promised them that they should have long service leave.

The Minister for Railways: We did not. I have repudiated that twice.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister may repudiate it, but there is no gainsaying that the railway employees expected the Government to fulfil the promise made.

The Minister for Railways: Made by whom?

Mr. THOMSON: By members of the Minister's own party. The Minister himself, when sitting on the Opposition side of the House, moved the motion.

The Minister for Railways: Well, what of that?

Mr. THOMSON: Surely the Minister is not going to suggest that he was not sincere.

Hon. G. Taylor: He told the railwaymen it would have been carried if it had not been for me.

Mr. THOMSON: Surely the Minister is not going to suggest that he was insincere when he moved the motion. I am satisfied he was sincere. When he became Minister for Railways the men looked to him to fulfil the promise he had made.

The Minister for Railways: No; the motion was that long service leave be arranged for by the Railway Department, and it was arranged for as soon as possible. In the meantime other necessary industrial reforms were granted to the employees.

Mr. Kenneally: And in the meantime also there was a necessary change of Government.

Mr. THOMSON: We assume that the Labour Party won the election on that promise. That bears out the statement I made.

I think the railway employees were of opinion that long service leave would be granted by administrative act.

Hon. G. Taylor: Of course.

Mr. THOMSON: At the election last March the Government said, "If we are returned we will give it to you." If that was not an election bribe, I do not know what was.

Hon. G. Taylor: The men did not believe them at the last election.

Mr. Withers: Fulfilling a promise would not constitute an election bribe.

Mr. THOMSON: Was it not remarkable that the Labour Party were in office for three years and, though they had had plenty of time to bring the matter forward, they refrained from doing so until just before the last election. One could come to no other conclusion than that it was an election bribe. We naturally concluded that the question of granting long service leave would be brought before the House and determined in a constitutional manner.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is right.

Mr. THOMSON: Members would then have been able to discuss the question and consider it in all its bearings. But what have the Government done? They have put the matter into the hands of the Arbitration Court and the court is awarding leave over a period of three years. If, during that period, there is any change for the worse in the finances of the railways, which God forbid, then those not lucky enough to qualify within that period may not get long service leave.

Hon. G. Taylor: You think the court will not renew it?

Mr. THOMSON: If the finances of our railways reach the parlous condition of the railway finances in New South Wales, Queensland, and even South Australia, I believe the Arbitration Court would hesitate to renew it.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Do you think the railway men would press for it?

Mr. THOMSON: That is the point. The hon. member, who is an old railway employee, asks whether the men would press for it. The bulk of the railway employees, I believe, would say they were quite prepared to stand by the State and do a fair thing. The member for Albany, however, is backing up my argument, though quite unconsciously. From many years' experience as a traveller on the railways and as a customer of the railways for 25 years, I have never met a finer body of men than

those in our Railway Department. They compare more than favourably with the staff of any other railway service.

Mr. Kenneally: Possibly I could get you to give evidence on their behalf before the Arbitration Court.

Mr. THOMSON: Of those qualifications I should have no hesitation whatever in speaking, but I think my evidence would hardly suit the hon. member. I would not be sufficiently submissive; I would not be prepared to go into the court and present as my evidence something previously prepared and handed to me by the hon. member. I am afraid I would show a certain amount of independence.

Mr. Lindsay: He would probably treat you as a hostile witness.

Mr. THOMSON: Let me deal with another phase. I believe in giving credit where credit is due. There is no doubt that in the administrative officers we have men of outstanding ability. On the Estimates we find salary increases for the manager of the tramways and for officers in other departments, and it would have been only an act of justice to extend the same courtesy to the Commissioner of Railways. During his regime he has clearly demonstrated his ability to handle the staff to advantage. That is evidenced by the splendid results. Despite the fact that working costs have been increased through the introduction of the 44-hour week and through other surcharges, the Commissioner has been able to show a small profit, though for that he must thank to some extent the bountiful harvest. We have a large railway service, and it is rather staggering to find that the Midland Railway Company pay their Commissioner a higher salary than we pay Colonel Pope.

Mr. Kennedy: Nonsense!

Mr. THOMSON: It is not nonsense. The hon. member should not interject in that way unless he knows the facts. From my information the gentleman administering Midland Railway is receiving more than is our Commissioner of Railways. As the Government have granted increases in other departments, the Commissioner of Railways is entitled to similar consideration. It is gratifying to find that the working of the railways reflects the increased prosperity of the State due to the bountiful harvest. I do not propose to deal closely with the figures, but it is worthy of mention that direct primary production was responsible for approximately a million pounds worth

of freights. The railways may be regarded as the financial barometer of the State. So long as we have good seasons and the railways are not overburdened by unjust demands, they will be able to show satisfactory results. It has been suggested that the freight on superphosphate should be increased by 6d. per ton. We know that superphosphate is being carried at a very cheap rate. The Minister, however, realises that there is no freight carried by his department that gives a better return. Not only does it give a return to the department, but it gives a return to the State through the Agricultural Bank and in many other ways. The use of superphosphate is not only reflected in increased railway traffic, but in increased incomes from which the Treasurer obtains revenue. The Minister for Lands visited my district during the last week end. We inspected a district which a few years ago was regarded as one of the most hopeless centres in the State. We had Professor Paterson and experts of the Agricultural Department down there, and all the people said the land was not productive, and was not capable of carrying live stock so that it was possible to breed from it. Experiments have since been carried out, some at the suggestion of the department, with the result that superphosphate has been extensively used as a top dressing, and land which had not responded in any way to agriculture is now giving excellent returns. By the use of superphosphate that district will now raise hundreds of thousands of acres to a high taxable value, which must be of benefit to the State. Not only will the people in the district be able to pay rates and taxes, but will be able to progress with their own affairs. The railways have given excellent results. The regrading has been profitable work. The employees of the system have been able by means of suggestions to bring about alterations and different methods which have meant considerable savings in the cost of administration. Most of the employees with whom I come into contact are imbued with the desire to earn their pay. If, however, there was less interference by the unions, some of the men would be more satisfied than they are now.

Hon. G. Taylor: You need not look at the member for East Perth.

Mr. THOMSON: I would not dare to do so, lest I should be ruled out of order. Many employees, if they were interfered with less by the unions and

had fewer restrictions imposed upon them, would find their pay envelope every fortnight larger than it is to-day and would be more satisfied.

The Minister for Railways. These men are the unions themselves.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister cannot pull wool over my eyes.

The Minister for Railways: I do not want to.

Mr. THOMSON: Some of us knew a little about the unions and their methods.

The Minister for Railways: I know all about them. You have not been a member of the Railway Union.

Mr. THOMSON: No, but from the men I have heard of some of the ramifications of the union. I have heard that instructions have gone out from a certain union to the effect that if a train loses half an hour the men are not permitted to make up that time.

The Minister for Railways: I do not think any union did that.

Mr. THOMSON: It may be incorrect information.

The Minister for Railways: It probably is.

Mr. THOMSON: I have been informed that that is so. Probably there are men in the service who are not working much more than 30 hours a week, but are being paid as if they worked 44. These men would be satisfied to work a little longer and get some overtime, because it would mean a heavier envelope at the end of the fortnight.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: You are treading on dangerous ground. You will lose your depot.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is not justified in making that remark. We are here to administer the affairs of the State. I am not dealing with any particular depot. The same thing might apply to Albany. We are very fortunate in having administrative officers who have shown, despite ever increasing cost, very good results. I am going to watch the Railway Department closely during the next 12 months to see whether it will show as good results as it has shown in the past, and whether the next annual report will reveal the same progress. The State derives quite a number of benefits from the foresight of departmental experts. The Minister referred to the regrading of the line between Wooroloo and Chidlow, and said this meant an increase of 800 tons in the load. That shows that the administrators of the department are

very keen. I congratulate the Minister on having provided new trucks, which were absolutely essential. We are adding to the railway mileage every year, and have much leeway to make up. I was gratified to hear that provision was being made for extra sheets. They will be of great benefit to many districts. I should like to see more provision made for sidings. In the Nyabing extension from Katanning there are two sidings through which the railway has passed for several years. At present the settlers have to drive their stock many miles to the nearest trucking yard. The Minister may say that they can always have the use of the portable race, but there are no yards in which to handle the stock. Sooner than face that inconvenience the settlers have travelled their sheep to Nyabing or in the opposite direction. I hope the Minister will be able to make some provision for goods sheds. Quite a number of sidings are unattended. The Minister may say that at the cheap rate at which he is hauling super. the railways cannot afford to provide shed accommodation. When super. is being carried at the peak periods it is to the interests of the department to see that the trucks are unloaded as early as possible. I believe that the Commissioner authorises flying gangs to unload the trucks. Trucks of super. may arrive and the settlers, being unable to cart all of it at once, leave some of it behind. If the department could provide some cheap shed accommodation at these places, capable of sheltering several tons of material and produce, they would be supplying a long felt want. At several unattended sidings in my district farmers have preferred to go four or five miles out of their way, and have their goods delivered at some other place where they can store them in a shed. I promise the Minister to give his suggestion as to superphosphate freights serious consideration. One hesitates to accept willingly any increase in railway freights. Like the income tax, it is easy to put it on, but it is hard to get it back. The present position is unsatisfactory. Many people require their super. for top dressing at a time when the Railway Department are charging the higher rate.

Mr. Griffiths: Do they not allow a concession during that time?

Mr. THOMSON: No. People have to pay the higher rate after April. The State has every reason to congratulate itself upon the satisfactory financial posi-

tion when we compare it with railways in other parts of the Commonwealth.

MR. KENNEALLY (East Perth) [9.28]: There are some speakers who, if they confined themselves to farming questions, would be dealing with matters upon which they are authorities.

Mr. Griffiths: And upon which you know everything.

Mr. KENNEALLY: When they reach out and deal with other questions it often happens that they show that what they do not know would fill a fair sized volume. To-night we have heard the opinion of one or two speakers as to what the railway men think on the question of long service leave. We have heard from the member for Katanning one of the reasons why he has become so suddenly an advocate of long service leave to railway employees, independently of the fact that those who were directing the hon. member's party during the last campaign said that long service leave was too costly for the country and could not be granted.

Hon. G. Taylor: That was an honest opinion, was it not?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: They were not catering for votes.

Mr. KENNEALLY: That represented the views of members opposite. Why, now that the Government have done the right thing and given this long service leave, have members become apostles of the idea? For a long time their party denied the justice of such a scheme.

Mr. Thomson: Are you suggesting that I am in favour of it?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member said he was prepared to expend the money, and the Leader of the Opposition said he was willing to support it.

Mr. Thomson: I did not say for long service leave. I said it was the lesser of two evils, and that if the money had to be spent it might be spent on that.

The Minister for Railways: They are not either of them evils; they are two good things.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member has left it open so that he can oppose long service leave if the opportunity offers. Yet he is so anxious concerning the welfare of the railway men that he says, in conjunction with the Leader of the Opposition, that the fault they have to find with the

Government is that they have not done the right thing by the railway men because this leave should have been granted three years ago.

Mr. Thomson: I did not say that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There was a very necessary change of Government, and at last the hope long deferred was granted. The railway men have now received what they should have received from the Government of which the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) was a member.

Mr. Latham: It was a question of finding the money for long service leave.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Such questions as that of policy in regard to railway bridges can be dealt with on the Loan Estimates. The previous Minister for Railways promised the construction of certain bridges, and the promise has not been fulfilled. There is also the question of the Mt. Lawley subway. Turning now to the question of the railways being a paying concern, I must point out the necessity for a change in our policy of management. People who deny the railway workers social justice are not behind the door when it comes to riding on the backs of railway men and struggling farmers in order to secure cheap service from the railway system. There is a method by which a man is assisted to go on the land, but there is no period at which he is told, "You have made good on the land, and therefore must pay for services rendered."

Mr. Thomson: He is charged a high land tax.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Everyone in the State pays land tax. In and out of this Chamber I have always contended that there should be a period for telling the man on the land, "You have now to look after yourself."

Mr. Latham: He does so, too.

Mr. Thomson: And he carries you and many others on his back.

Mr. KENNEALLY: There is the workers' homes legislation, which says to the man without a home, "You will be assisted to provide a home for yourself." A similar limitation does not apply to the farmer, who can receive assistance from the State whether he already has one farm or 10 farms. On the question of whether the railways are a paying proposition we have to inquire whether the freights charged mean a fair return for the services rendered. In

many cases the answer is, No. Many men on the land who receive assistance have three, four, or five farms, and to that extent represent obstacles to the struggling men on the land. We are told that cheap rates for super pay the State because it gets a benefit in the greater yield of wheat.

Mr. Griffiths: New Zealand recognises that principle; there the State carries super free.

Mr. KENNEALLY: And that is the reason why New Zealand's finances are in such a condition. If the argument applies to super and wheat, should it not also apply to sawmilling machinery and mining machinery, which help to produce commodities that give the railways the tonnage necessary for satisfactory financial returns? But would the farmers' representatives here support such a proposal?

Mr. Thomson: Get another drought like that of 1914 and you will damned soon see where you are!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KENNEALLY: The member for Katanning must be getting interested when he uses such language. Legislation is needed to compel the established farmer to get off the backs of the other farmers and off the Railway Department's back. The farmer requiring no further assistance should be told to cease taking assistance and to render some to farmers not so well established. Either we must cease to regard our railways as a paying concern, or else we must provide for them a developmental grant from the Treasury for special services rendered, and a further grant in recognition of the fact that some of our railways can only be regarded as developmental agencies. The Constitutionalists opposite always say to the workers, "Take the case to the Arbitration Court"; but as soon as they see the least possible chance of long delayed justice being granted to the workers, they endeavour, from the floor of this Chamber, to direct the Arbitration Court as to what that court should do in regard to evidence submitted. The member for Katanning did that.

Mr. Thomson: Do you suggest that the claims you put up were reasonable?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I suggest that if the hon. member interjecting had the opportunity he desires, the railway employees of this State would find themselves in a most parlous condition.

Mr. Thomson: Certainly not.

Mr. KENNEALLY: At any rate, they had sufficient sense to tell the member for Katanning that they would have nothing to do with him and that they had placed their case in abler hands. Another aspect of railway finance requiring attention is the system whereby the amount of the tax on unimproved land values was to be collected and paid into Consolidated Revenue, railway freights and charges to be reduced in a corresponding degree. The amount of the tax was estimated at £45,000. Can we judge a public utility as a business concern if we direct that revenue must be paid in to one department and that an equivalent amount must go out of another department, which never received it?

Mr. Latham: You see that it is done; we cannot do so.

Mr. KENNEALLY: When we give consideration to the question whether the railways are paying or not, we must remember the services rendered for which the department is not fully paid.

The Minister for Lands: Does the Railway Department not get paid from other sources?

Mr. KENNEALLY: From which source?

The Minister for Lands: The sources that are served.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Let the Minister consult his colleague the Minister for Railways and after they have discussed the position we may learn the result of their deliberations.

The Minister for Lands: I pay some of that cost.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member knows that when he pays for his super he pays less than it costs to take it to his centre. There are various aspects that have to be considered. It was mentioned by the Minister that we have been spending an additional amount of money in connection with replacements and so forth, compared with the expenditure of the previous Administration. That is true and must be taken into consideration. If the Government embark upon a policy, the effect of which will be to bring the railways back to the position they should have been in, and in order to do that have charged up more against loan account than against revenue, that position must also be taken into consideration when regarding the financial results of the railways. The member for Katanning quoted figures that really illustrate the fact that the Government realise their responsibilities in that

regard. To sum up the position regarding the finances, we have to ask ourselves if the book-keeping work of the Railway Department is being correctly carried out. If it is, and it can be shown that there have been losses, we can take into consideration methods by which those losses can be prevented. Until we do that, it is useless to say that we cannot afford what the railway employees are justly entitled to. We cannot adopt that attitude if the book-keeping method of debits and credits are not properly carried out. As to the offer of the Minister regarding the increase of £d. on the flat rate for the carriage of super.—

The Minister for Railways: I put that forward as a temporary suggestion.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Hon. members will realise that the reason advanced by the present and the previous Governments for reducing the freight on super. was that they were able to some extent to meet losses by confining the application of the cheaper rates to certain periods during which the trucks were despatched to the country to convey wheat to the coast. If, with the slight increase suggested, we can make the cheaper rates apply for the whole year, it will be at the option of the farming community to take advantage of those rates at any time during the 12 months rather than during the periods when the trucks are necessary in the country to bring down the wheat. I believe the Minister has under-estimated the amount that will be involved in this further concession. Moreover, that concession will apply to all farmers, irrespective of whether they are independent or not.

Mr. Griffiths: Do not forget that there were a million bags of wheat to be taken down, and super. is required in the country to produce that quantity.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If that interjection indicates anything, it is that within the prescribed few months, even allowing for an extension of a few days, the whole of the super. requirements have been despatched to the country, and that for the remaining portion of the year there will be no empty trucks going out under the cheaper rates.

Mr. Griffiths: We can do it up to July and, in fact, even later.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I hope consideration will be given to these points before the agreement is finalised. I trust that the concession will be confined to farmers who are in need of it, men who have not yet estab-

lished themselves on the land. I hope it will not apply to people who, through the generosity of the State, have been able to attain financial independence.

Mr. Latham: What do you think it would cost to differentiate between farmers who should receive the concession and those who you say should not receive it?

Mr. KENNEALLY: What does it cost the State to ascertain who is entitled to a worker's home or to a pension? We have to pay attention to all such questions, and I do not regard the point referred to by the member for York (Mr. Latham) as one of great difficulty. It would not be insurmountable. We could say that up to a certain stage the State will help farmers, will place them on the land and help them to become independent. When they become independent they must drop out of the arrangement, and the additional amount involved should be devoted to assisting those who have not become firmly established.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Farmers are doing more to carry the State than the State has done to carry the farmers.

Mr. KENNEALLY: That is the hon. member's logic.

Mr. Withers: They would not have been able to do it had the State not carried them first.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The farmers have rightly been assisted to become independent, and I hope that at no distant time those who have become independent will in turn be willing to allow the assistance that they had been receiving to cease, so that it may be devoted to assisting others who may be endeavouring to establish themselves.

Mr. Griffiths: I can see the member for East Perth doing that sort of thing!

Hon. G. Taylor: If we have no wheat yield we will not require the railways so much.

Mr. KENNEALLY: As to railway administration, while members have praised the efforts of the Government for the work that has been done, the remarks of hon. members have mostly referred to financial matters. There are other considerations that must receive attention. If the present system of elevating officers to responsible positions is allowed to continue, there is not the slightest doubt that the railwaymen will not continue working as contentedly as at present. If, after long years of service, railwaymen find they cannot rely upon re-

ceiving promotion in their turn, but on the contrary find others without their years of service or even with their qualifications, being promoted over their heads, the position will not make for contentment in the service. It is high time that the system of promotions should be controlled in some way by the Minister. It is not right that the responsibility for promotions, temporary or otherwise, should be left entirely in the hands of the Commissioner.

Hon. G. Taylor: I suppose you think you could get a better deal from politicians than you could get from the Commissioner.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I believe we would get more justice from the Minister than from the Commissioner. If we believe the State should have control over its own affairs, why should we allow that control to pass out of our hands?

Hon. G. Taylor: In days gone by we exercised that control, but it was done in a bad way. We handed over that responsibility to the Commissioner in the end.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I admit that in all probability it was done badly when the hon. member was in control, but we have passed beyond that stage.

Mr. Griffiths: Don't be silly!

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is easy to imitate the hon. member! I hope some alteration will be effected regarding the system of promotion.

Hon. G. Taylor: You will have to convince the House on that point.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member is not the House. I am addressing myself to members generally.

Hon. G. Taylor: I like you fledglings coming along and telling us what to do.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Another system that has been adopted is to call for applications all over the State for the filling of junior clerkships in the railway service. There has been a tendency to increase the qualifications required for those juniors. At present those applying for positions as junior clerks must hold the certificate showing that they have passed the junior examination at the University. I am not one to disregard the benefits of education. On one or two occasions we prevailed upon the Commissioner to lower the standard necessary for the applicants. At one time the seventh standard was all that was required. Then it was the eighth standard and finally it has crept back to the junior University standard. Hon. members may contend that

if we can secure a sufficiency of applications from those youths who hold the junior certificate, we should be contented. But such a system does not give equal opportunity to the youths throughout the State. At the last University examinations 70 per cent. of the entries were from the metropolitan area and 22 per cent. from such centres as Kalgoorlie, Northam, and Bunbury, where there are high schools. That left eight per cent. of the entries to be drawn from the rest of the State. If we are to provide the youths throughout the State with opportunities to join the railway service, we should not insist upon such a high educational standard before allowing a youth to join up. I trust that when applications are being called for in future, consideration will be given to the standard of education required. If we send railway men into the never-never, we should see that an opportunity is given to the sons of those men to secure employment in good positions either in the railways or elsewhere. They should have an equal opportunity with the sons of men living in the metropolis or in the larger towns of the State. But we are not doing that under the present system. Therefore I hope when applications are being again called, consideration will be given to that aspect in order that justice may be done to those not situated in the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. Taylor: Reducing the standard would help you, would it not?

Mr. KENNEALLY: As a matter of fact, the world's experience is that the man with the highest standard of education does not always make the most successful man in trade or calling. Therefore I cannot understand why the University junior certificate is being insisted upon to the detriment of many able lads who would otherwise have opportunities of making good, whose parents are stationed away from the metropolis. Those lads should have equal opportunity with those stationed in the metropolis to secure the positions. We have heard something about long service leave. We were asked in the first place, why did the Government not bring in a system of superannuation, rather than long service leave? I am not going to tackle the question from that point of view. What I am going to do is to ask how long is it going to be before the railwaymen are given that which operate in the railways in three States of the Commonwealth already, namely, a superannuation system. Why should this

State be behind three other States? These men were consulted as to which they would have, but at the same time long service leave operates in other States of the Commonwealth. Why have we heard so much about it in this State, and why do we hear the pleadings of certain members that there should be a system of retiring allowance, instead of long service leave? I ask why not long service leave and retiring allowance? The men are entitled to it, and the Government should provide it. We have in the service men who have grown old in that service. They have loyally carried out their duties, and that should be recognised. When the time comes for them to retire, the least the State should do is to provide for them an allowance. That allowance should be provided out of the coffers of the State, assisted by the men themselves. For, after all, where those superannuation schemes are in operation, the money is not provided exclusively out of Government funds. Nevertheless, in three other railway systems of Australia adequate arrangements are made for superannuation.

Hon. G. Taylor: What do you suggest should be the retiring age for members of this House?

Mr. KENNEALLY: We will deal with that when we have a Bill for the purpose. Of course the hon. member can foresee what is coming at the next elections, and I should like to help him to make due arrangements. But we should not discuss whether long service leave should make way for superannuation. Long service leave already operates in other States and, since it has been introduced here, we should give attention to the introduction of a superannuation scheme in order that provision should be made for those men who by reason of advancing age cannot continue in the service any longer.

Hon. G. Taylor: It would be a good thing if we could arrange for it for all workers.

Mr. Latham: I agree with that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I do not see why industry should not carry the charges that should be on industry. If the railway industry is called upon to make certain provision, why should not the railways themselves provide the necessary money?

Mr. Lindsay: According to the Minister for Railways, the railway systems in the other States are not made to carry this charge.

Mr. Latham: See the position in South Australia.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes, see the result in South Australia now, particularly in view of the fact that the officers there ran amok over the proposed rehabilitation scheme and now want the employees to stand the racket. That is the position in South Australia. In the good years in South Australia we did not hear of the profits of the railways being put to a suspense account out of which the lean years might be met. No! It was, "Let the profits go to Consolidated Revenue." Let the service be rendered there, as it is here, below the cost of this service, and then if it shows a loss, say that the railways are not paying.

Mr. Lindsay: Our railways are paying, are they not?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes, they are, because we have a staff prepared to do the work. But if we do not retain a contented staff, if members opposite are not prepared to do a fair thing by the railway employees, if they destroy the contentedness essential to efficiency, the time will come when our railways will not pay. In the interests of both the State and the railway employees, we require to see that the system continues under which the railway men are co-operating and assisting to build up the industry. When dealing with the tramways, the Minister mentioned the agreement entered into with the City Council for the supply of electric current, and stated that portion of what otherwise would be the loss of £25,000 was recouped by virtue of the fact that the tramways were charged an additional amount for the current they were using.

The Minister for Railways: I said some of it.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes, I have acknowledged that. I looked carefully to see whether that was mentioned when the tramway men were applying for better wages. But the advocate representing the tramways apparently forgot to mention it. He simply pointed out the financial position of the tramways and declared that they could not bear a certain increase in wages. It shows that the same thing operates in the tramways as in the railways. If we are going to judge them simply on the financial figures placed before us, without seeking to discover whether those figures have been

correctly compiled from the point of view of charge for services rendered, we are not going to arrive at a just conclusion. Here we have it stated by the Minister himself that, after all, the cost of running the tramways need not have been as great as it is if attention had not been given to the fact that an unholy agreement was entered into with the City Council for the provision of current over a long number of years at an unprofitable rate. I am not complaining of the system of operating the finances so that they will not show a total loss of £25,000. But if we are to judge whether the tramways or the railways are paying, and if we have to ask whether they are paying before we do justice to the people employed on them, we have to see that the figures show the exact position, and make the necessary charges so that the services rendered shall be adequately paid for. Dealing with the question of long service leave, the Leader of the Opposition said that an equivalent amount should be made available to provide for retiring allowances and he attacked the Minister for not having made provision for long service leave long ago. I contested the Northam sent on two occasions against the present Leader of the Opposition. On one occasion he was Minister for Railways.

Mr. Latham: And you did not get all the railway votes, did you?

Mr. KENNEALLY: No, otherwise I should have been returned, and a good member would have been lost to this House.

Mr. Lindsay: We would not have gained much.

Mr. KENNEALLY: That is a matter of opinion, which I will leave to members to judge. Possibly the same remark could be applied to a number of other members but I do not propose to do that. There was a time when the Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity to grant long service leave or provide the equivalent money in retiring allowances, but he did not avail himself of the opportunity. It is easy to be a critic and say to the Government who are prepared to do the thing, "You have not done it in the right way," but it would have been as easy for the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Railways, or even when he was Premier, to make an attempt to do justice to the men in the manner he now says it should have been done.

Hon. G. Taylor: Why, he was struggling for his life to square the finances after the previous Government!

Mr. KENNEALLY: When we have a Government who are able to square the finances and in addition to give long service leave, it ill-becomes the man who could not do it to criticise the man who could.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They did not rush the job particularly, anyhow.

Mr. KENNEALLY: They got there all the same. The railway men are thankful that the long fight has been brought to a successful issue. Dealing with the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Katanning, when the time came to make some advance in granting long delayed justice to the railway men, the Minister consulted them to ascertain what could be done. The deliberate vote of the railway men, through their officers, was that long service leave was the question they desired should be attended to, and after that superannuation.

Hon. G. Taylor: I see, you want the two?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Of course we do, and we shall not rest content until such time as we get the two.

Hon. G. Taylor: I suppose you will want the railways altogether if we do not stop you.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member can do his utmost to stop the progress of the State; he has done a lot towards that already, but let me tell him that progress cannot be stayed. What has been achieved in other railway systems throughout the Commonwealth must necessarily be achieved here and the railway men of Western Australia will secure that which has been secured in four of the seven railway systems of the Commonwealth. There is nothing new in asking for that which has been granted elsewhere, which has been enjoyed for years elsewhere and which, at the earliest possible moment, should be enjoyed by employees similarly situated in this State.

Hon. G. Taylor: If it applies to the railway men, it should apply to everybody.

Mr. KENNEALLY: An effort was made to introduce a superannuation system some years ago. When the Government supported by members opposite were in power, we waited on the then Minister for Railways, Mr. Scaddan, with a view to getting him to make provision for men growing old in the service. Mr. Scaddan said that

only a certain sum of money could be made available, and it would have to be spread over a long period of years. The members of the committee on the question of superannuation, in conjunction with the Government Actuary, drew up a scheme to absorb the amount suggested by the Minister and the results were placed before the employees of the railway service who, by ballot, turned the proposition down with a thud. They turned it down for the simple reason that in some instances it would have cost men on the basic wage up to 10s. a week to make provision for their old age. We were able to show at that time that men on the basic wage were not in a position to spare any money to make that provision. Therefore the proposition became impossible. When the question of retiring allowance versus long service leave came up on this occasion the men, particularly those growing old in the service, considered that as no scheme could be propounded on the money available previously, it would be well to get for some a respite from long years of service that they might be able to recuperate and work a little longer on the basic wage rather than retire with nothing at all. I am hopeful that before the life of this Parliament expires there will have been brought into operation a system of retiring allowances, and that the Government will have said to the men who have already grown old in the service, "You have served the State well; the State will now serve you well."

[Mr. Intey took the Chair.]

Hon. G. Taylor: Save that till the next election.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Then I hope we shall have the support of the hon. member. We are all growing older and should consider it from that point of view. When the question is brought up members recognising the services rendered to the State by the railway employees should be prepared to say, "Seeing that you have proved yourselves in your work the equals at least of railway employees elsewhere, you should not be denied that which applies to railway employees elsewhere." That comprises the whole claim the railway men are putting up. Let me give some attention to the question of the union's operations referred to by the member for Katanning. The hon. member said that if it were not for the unions there would be greater contentment

in the service; if it were not for the action of the unions some of the members would not have claimed increased wages and better conditions. He attempted to buttress that statement by saying that he had been in unions and knew the operations of unions. Let me tell him that members of the unions knew what they were about when they did not take their grievances to the member for Kataning for attention.

Hon. G. Taylor: He would put up a good case.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I should say so on the evidence he brought forward here. The men would decline his assistance and take the risk of falling without it, because they would certainly fall with it. The member for Kataning now challenges anyone to say that he ever supported long service leave. In other words he leaves it open, if he happens to be sitting behind a Government that is prepared to dishonour the promise made by this Government, to reserve to himself the right to deprive these men of what they have been able to get.

Hon. G. Taylor: Why not put the matter beyond the reach of any Government?

Mr. KENNEALLY: We shall make a move in that direction later on. Long service leave is the law of the country. I agree it should be settled by regulation, and should be placed beyond the power of any Government to say yea or nay to it.

Mr. Lindsay: When was that law passed.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Does not the hon. member know that arbitration is the law of the land? These people went to the Arbitration Court, which gave them a decision that became law.

Mr. Lindsay: Not long service leave.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is under an industrial agreement that is registered under the law of the country.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did the court grant it or did the Government give it to the court to put in the agreement?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Act makes provision for the registration of industrial agreements. When they are registered they become the law of the land. On the application for a common rule they become the law for people who were not represented when the agreement was made.

Mr. Lindsay: Did the Arbitration Act provide for long service leave?

Mr. KENNEALLY: An agreement was registered in which long service leave was provided.

Mr. Davy: They registered the agreement?

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is the law of the land that agreements shall be registered.

Mr. Davy: Do not suggest that anyone passed that law?

Mr. KENNEALLY: By that means it became the law of the land. The law was passed when the Industrial Arbitration Act was passed.

Mr. Davy: No, it was not.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Naturally, we do not like to argue with any legal luminary.

Mr. Davy: Do you not like to argue?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Legal gentlemen cannot charge for their services in this House.

Hon. G. Taylor: Your modesty prevents you from charging.

Mr. KENNEALLY: These men have complied with the law. They have registered an industrial agreement, and it is the law of the land that long service leave shall be granted to them until such time as the law through the Arbitration Court, says otherwise.

Mr. Davy: No, until such time as the agreement expires.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Until the law says otherwise. The law says it shall continue until such time as is provided by the law. The position of the railways to-day is gratifying, and to those who know the methods by which these services are rendered to the country at less than cost, they are more than gratifying. Before we can bring about a greater surplus over working expenses and the cost of running the railway service, we must make provision whereby the people may pay more for the services that are rendered. I hope the Government will have a larger conception of what is required. We know that increased business is offering, and naturally we must make provision for it. We cannot do that unless the system is extended. For instance, more rolling stock will be required. I know that the stock has been increased in recent years. I very much doubt whether we shall be able to keep up with the manufacture of locomotive power and cope with the increased business by making our locomotives locally.

The Minister for Railways: I hope we shall be able to do so.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It will be in the interests of the country if that can be done.

If that is to be done, we must lay down a programme to cover a given number of years.

The Minister for Railways: We have a programme for three years ahead now.

Mr. KENNEALLY: We should make every endeavour to keep the money within the State. I trust before this Parliament ends we shall be able to see long service leave happily established, whether by regulation or under industrial agreements, and that, in addition to giving the men an opportunity to recuperate, we shall be taking care of them when they cannot perform for the State the services they have rendered in the past.

MISS HOLMAN (Forrest) [10.28]: I was interested to hear the figures quoted by the Minister for Railways showing the revenue derived from timber. It is a fine industry to be returning such revenue to our railway system. I notice that the vote for the railway mill is slightly reduced. I wish to thank the Minister for several things he has done for us. Amongst the improvements he has given to the people at the railway mill are electric light facilities. I think that is the only mill in the industry at which all the people engaged have electric light. He has also improved the hall, and done other things to help the people along. I have been instructed to point out to him that there are ways in which the administrative costs at the mill could be reduced.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that in connection with the railways?

Miss HOLMAN: It is in connection with the railway mill. I have been informed that the Minister would be repaid if he held an investigation into the administration there. It is said, and I have proof of this, that spur lines have been put down into parts of the bush, and taken up again sometimes without being used. This is public money. We should be grateful to the people down there who are looking out for any waste in this regard. We have complaints that lines have been laid down in the bush running through to other concessions, without a proper survey having been made. These lines have also been pulled up. Even in cases where the lines were used, timber was left, and it cost a good deal of money to put down more lines in order to get the timber after the lapse of several months. I ask the Minister to make strict inquiry into the complaints that have been

forwarded from the bush landing, concerning the administration of the mill. I ask him to provide us with information showing the details of the lines that have been pulled up before the sections of the bush they served had been cut out and lines that were laid and then pulled up without having been used. There are also complaints about lines being re-laid after having been pulled up many years ago, and about patches of bush left isolated which could have been cut out when the camp was near, and which will now cost hundreds of pounds in shifting camp back to cut them out. The Railway Mill is a great asset to the Railway Department, and I feel sure the Minister will take note of these complaints and see that they are investigated. I feel sure, too, that if the complaints are found to be based on fact, a satisfactory remedy will be applied to prevent such waste of money in future.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [10.32]: The report of the Commissioner of Railways speaks for itself, and eulogy from me is unnecessary. The picture drawn is most encouraging, if only from the aspect of the State's progress and the fine quality of railway management that is evidenced. The Minister pointed out that a good deal of improvement had resulted from deviations, alterations of grade, regeneration of old rolling stock, and improvement of engines with increase of hauling capacity. A most pleasing feature is that so much of the truck and engine construction work is being done in the State's workshop. The profit for the year, some £36,000, is excellent; and its full excellence is appreciated when one contrasts it against last year's loss of £31,000. The total improvement, therefore, is in the neighbourhood of £67,000. Further, the basic wage has meant an increase of £35,000 in the departmental expenditure. Again, there has been a full year's operation of the 44-hour week, the extra cost of which cannot be estimated accurately, but must be considerable. Lastly, there is an increase of £27,500 in the interest bill. The report discloses no less than 37 increases. There are eight decreases, some of them most satisfactory, because they tend towards increased earnings by the department. In New Zealand it has been the vogue to carry superphosphate free. From the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) a good deal has been heard about the transport of superphosphate here at a low rate. In strong con-

trast there is the Minister's attitude, which appears broadly developmental. The Minister recognises that every ton of super carried over the railways means tons of back loading in the form of produce. As pointed out by the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), the provision of super at a cheap freight has meant that many districts are now providing large revenue for the railways, whereas in the absence of super no freight would be forthcoming from them. There has been much talk about super being carried by the department at a loss. If after the super had been delivered on the wheat belt the trucks had had to come back empty, the position might be calculated from a loss point of view; but, in fact, ample back loading has been provided in respect of any super transport into the country districts. Up to the 1st July 1,015,000 bags of wheat had not been railed, and presumably they have been railed during the last three months. Thus there has been back loading from the beginning of the year up to the end of August. The suggestion of 6d. per ton as a flat rate all round would remove much of the trouble occasioned by deputation after deputation waiting upon us to request the Minister to grant extension of the time for cheap carriage of super. The wheat forecast for this season is 33,871,346 bushels. There is a possibility that Victoria will have a big harvest, and beat our output, but it is doubtful. Some pessimists in this State are doubtful whether our forecast will be realised. Victoria is looking forward to a harvest of 35 million bushels, as against 46 million last year. South Australia expects 19 million bushels; and New South Wales, hoping for the best, looks to get 20 million. We on our part seem destined to leave the other States behind, and the Minister therefore can be well assured of having back loading for his trucks up to the end of August, 1928.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: We have not yet shifted all the harvest.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I believe it is all shifted by now. Reference was made to the carriage of timber over the railways, and I was rather surprised to see that local timber had accounted for revenue amounting to £422,000 as against £404,029 from wheat. That is very fine, and when we consider the railway construction that has to be undertaken or is already in hand, I take it that the Minister will be able to look forward to

plenty of freight under that heading. I was rather tickled to hear the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) talk about the many well-to-do farmers who, he suggested, should take up so much of the white man's burden and assist their fellow settlers. I wonder how he would differentiate between those men who should pay the higher rates of freight, and those who should be permitted to enjoy the freight concessions? How could such a procedure be framed? Perhaps the member for East Perth will keep on trying to solve that problem. It does not appeal to me that because men have been helped by the State they should not receive credit, whether they be wheat farmers, pastoralists, or any other class of producer, for having had the energy and enterprise and pioneering spirit to open up the country in years gone by. If they are now enjoying the benefits derived from their operations, surely they are entitled to do so.

Mr. Thomson: They have earned those benefits.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: One would think that farmers were making fortunes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should indulge in these comments on the Lands Estimates.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The member for East Perth was allowed to wander all round the country when speaking on these Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to discuss the Railway Estimates.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am doing so, and strongly object to being pulled up in this way.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must discuss the Estimates before the Chair.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Is the member for East Perth specially exempted?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I heard that hon. member dealing with the railway employees. The member for Avon is dealing with a different section.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes, the men who are employing the railway employees. As I am not allowed to criticise the member for East Perth—

Mr. Corboy: That is a reflection upon the Chair.

Mr. Lindsay: The member for Avon is merely replying to the member for East Perth.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We will let it go at that. The outlook for the farmers at the present time is very bright.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with the Railway Estimates.

Mr. Davy. You cannot talk railways without talking wheat. The Minister himself did so.

Mr. Marshall: Well, I will speak on the Railway Estimates and deal with mining.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Avon may proceed and these interjections must cease.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I will deal with the increases and decreases that have been recorded in connection with the workings of the railways. I pointed out that there have been 37 increases. In Western Australia there is a mile of railway to every 97 people. The population increase has been 19.27 per cent. I mentioned that the report might be styled "Pope's Register of Increases." The interest bill in ten years has increased by 14.23 per cent. The cost of imported coal per ton has increased by 76.16 per cent., while the cost of Collier coal per ton has increased 75.80 per cent. The salaries paid to the salaried staff have increased by 25.58 per cent., and the wages paid to the wages staff by 4.26 per cent. The average payment per employee per annum, exclusive of Sunday time and overtime, has increased by 62.70 per cent. for the salaried staff and by 51.27 per cent. for the wages staff. The average wages paid per day increased by 65.29 per cent., while the total cost of the increased salaries represented an extra margin of 97.89 per cent., and the total cost of wages an increase of 60.01 per cent. In addition to that, the total cost of materials, excluding coal, increased by 36.59 per cent. A satisfactory point about the decreases has been in respect of the working expenses, which have decreased to the extent of .74 per cent. Regarding the working train miles, the decrease has been 1.58 per cent. One point in respect of which the decrease is not satisfactory relates to the passenger journeys which decreased by 720,149. Having given those details, I think the House will agree that my description of the Commissioner's report is rather apt. Regarding the railway earnings during the past month, it was satisfactory to me to note that the overcarry of wheat had been reflected in the operations of the Railway Department for the period ended the 30th September. Notwithstanding an increased bill of £8,565, as appearing in the report for that quarter, the operations of the Railway Department showed an improvement of £48,936 when

compared with the results of the July-September period of last year. The earnings totalled £884,371, and the working expenses £698,760. Allowing for a deduction of £227,912 for interest charges, the result showed a loss of £42,301 as compared with the loss for last year of £91,237. It will be seen that the result was highly satisfactory. To earn £100 during the quarter referred to it cost £79 0s. 2d., as compared with £83 6s. for the corresponding quarter of last year.

Mr. Lindsay: They did not carry so much wheat at that time.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: As 1,015,000 bushels of wheat awaited shipment at the end of July, that must have had considerable effect upon the returns for the last three months. While the respective returns on loan capital for the two periods were 3.50 per cent. and 2.49 per cent., it is satisfactory to know that the Western Australian railways for the year ended the 30th June last were the only Government railways in Australia to show a profit after paying working expenses and interest. I was interested in the Commissioner's comparison of working expenses as follows: New South Wales 72.97 per cent., Western Australia 74.44 per cent., Victoria 76.24 per cent.; Queensland 88.76 per cent., South Australia 89.43 per cent., the Commonwealth 94.53 per cent. The Minister has told us to-night that additional trucks are being built, that he has 12,000 trucks and is increasing them at the rate of ten per week. I had previously calculated that we had 10,332 trucks, that 9,712 were in running order, and that the remainder were out of commission. Let me turn to the wheat figures. There are three electorates in which I am specially interested, namely, my own, Toodyay to the north and York to the south. Up to the 30th June, 1927, the revenue derived from the shipment of wheat from Avon in excess of the previous year was £22,093 19s. 8d., from Toodyay £20,296 6s., from York £9,232 6s. 1d., or a total of £51,623 1s. 9d. That, for the three electorates, is just about half the total increase for the State, which was £102,651 10s. 6d. I have already referred to railway earnings and given the details. I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that some little attention should be paid to the railway stations in the wheat area from which so much of this revenue is coming. At Daglish, Mt. Barker, and other places large sums of money have been spent in building up to date railway

tations. For the metropolis only the very best must be supplied.

Mr. Marshall: Have a look at the West Perth station.

Mr. Mann: The Mt. Lawley station is not too satisfactory.

The Premier: Railway systems all over Europe get along without platforms.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have pointed out to the Minister the duplication of the lighting plant at Kellerberrin station. I hope an attempt will be made to provide something better than the oil lamps used there. It would be interesting to find out the yearly income earned at Kellerberrin and what it costs to run. If the Minister would but take that into consideration I feel certain that something would be done. Then at Cunderdin we have only cheap oil lamps on the station. The Minister ought to be able to make arrangements with the pumping station to supply better lighting for Cunderdin. Only the other day I was speaking to a man from Victoria who declared that any fifth rate or sixth rate station in Victoria would have infinitely better accommodation than we have at our stations. I wish the Minister would provide some better station accommodation at Kellerberrin and better lighting for Cunderdin. Now I want to touch upon the iniquitous owners' risk clause. I have here a letter from one man, and I could bring scores of other cases. My friend writes:—

Last year I lost a case of oranges. Guard couldn't find it with the other goods, and mentioned it to a friend, who went to Nukarni to meet the following train. So we are quite certain it never arrived; but when I put in my claim, Commissioner's reply is "not liable." I lost a case of apples later—same result. This year a case of plums—same result. Again, I had one case apples and one case plums; my boy met the train; guard handed out apples, and less than half the plums; case with lid off. I saw the guard later, and he said, "You will get your claim alright. I found the balance of your plums in the bottom of the van with another broken case of tomatoes, which I handed over to the stationmaster at Merredin." Now I would like to know what becomes of this and other stuff. Who gets it? When I first reported this the Commissioner replied, "Delivered two cases; my contract carried out." But when I found out from the guard, and told him what the Commissioner had said, the guard reported about finding the goods in the van. The Commissioner then said, "No liability; owner's risk."

That is only one instance of what takes place at hundreds of sidings throughout the

length and breadth of the State. It is iniquitous. There is plenty of pilfering. It may not be done by railway employees, but if the train arrives in the middle of the night, the stuff is dumped out and is stolen or ullaged, and the owner has to stand the racket.

Mr. Marshall: Your goods could not have been thrown out because they were found in the bottom of the van.

The Premier: The same thing has happened to those goods as happened to some copies of our "Hansard" here.

Mr. Corboy: Was that station No. 13?

The Premier: Yes, the same kind of farmers are about the country districts as you find about here.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: There is one thing I wish to mention before I close.

Mr. Corboy: Do not close yet.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I could continue for another half hour if the Minister wishes it. There is one little thing I wish to bring under the notice of the Minister.

The Premier: They are all little things.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In New South Wales there is a system known as farming trains. I had an interesting series of photographs sent to me illustrating what is being done along the north coast of New South Wales and in Victoria. This idea is copied from America and Canada, where it is referred to as taking the agricultural college to the farmer. I have some very interesting matter, but I do not propose to read it to-night. This idea has fulfilled the object in view, namely, to take information to the farmer. It is an idea that I think will be given effect to in this State before many years have passed. Everybody connected with the Railway Department can be congratulated on the result of the year's work. It must have been a pleasant task for the Minister to have such a cheerful story to unfold. I hope that the prognostications for the present season will be fully borne out.

Mr. Corboy: Even the one bag of wheat at Yilgarn.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The other night I heard the hon. member talking about Jeremiahs. I merely asked for a return and it was supplied by the Minister. I am as keen as is the member for Yilgarn to see the wheat belt extended, and I hope that the projected railways will open up a lot of new country.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must not discuss proposed railways on this vote.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I realise that, but interjections are apt to draw one off the track.

MR. LAMOND (Pilbara) [11.5]: The Minister is aware that the Port Hedland jetty comes under his department. At night time it is very difficult for the man engaged in checking to recognise any ullaged packages. It is necessary for him to do so while the goods are in the slings in order that a claim may be made on the shipping companies. If ullages are not noticed while the goods are in the slings, the shipping companies will not accept responsibility, and the Railway Department, on the other hand, have refused to pay indemnity. This is a very important matter at Port Hedland. The receiving and forwarding agents had a meeting recently that I was asked to attend, and the officer in charge of the railway was also present. I was asked to bring the matter under the notice of the Minister. Quite a lot of packages are being broached. At one time the receiving and forwarding agents' work of detecting ullaged packages was done in the goods shed, and the claims were made against the Railway Department. At that time it was quite easy to detect them and the claims were paid.

The Minister for Railways: The stuff might have been stolen on the boats.

Mr. LAMOND: In some instances it is, but as the officer in charge of the railways pointed out, he has no permanent man to do the checking. He has to pick up from casual labour available a man who may not be very competent to do the work. Broken cases can be fixed up so that it is difficult to detect the breakages, particularly when the cargo is in the slings. If the Railway Department receive the goods in good order and condition, the agents claim that the responsibility for indemnity should rest with the department. It is a matter that the Minister might well consider.

The Minister for Railways: I shall consider it.

MR. MANN (Perth) [11.8]: There are one or two matters I wish to mention.

Mr. Corboy: Do you want a subway at Pier-street?

Mr. MANN: We can do with several subways in Perth.

The CHAIRMAN: Subways do come under this vote.

Mr. MANN: There is no means of getting from the southern to the northern side of the railway after dark, except over Beaufort-street bridge, and great inconvenience is caused to people who have to travel from Melbourne-road to East Perth when there is only one means of crossing the line. I wish to refer to the condition of the tramways. For months a number of tram tracks in the city have been opened up. That is largely due to some misunderstanding.

The Minister for Railways: The roads are open too.

Mr. MANN: If the Minister would look at the condition under which our tramways has to be taken over the roads, he would realise the necessity for putting the tram tracks in order. There is some misunderstanding between the Tramway Department and the Municipal Council. In Bulwer-street the line has been open for months.

Mr. Corboy: Stirling-street has been open for a matter of five months.

Mr. MANN: It is apparent that the tramway track was laid too high for the roadway on each side. Carters are now engaged in removing the metal which causes the raising of the track, with a view to lowering it again. After the metal had been taken there, it is now being removed.

The Minister for Railways: The Tramway Department accepted the levels and surveys of the City Council.

Mr. MANN: The metal was carted to the sand and the track was raised. This necessitates the raising of the road level on each side. The work has remained in that condition for some months.

Mr. Marshall: Is the track now resting on the sand?

The Minister for Mines: Metal is now being carted to Bulwer-street and put on the track. None has been carted away.

Mr. MANN: The Minister for Mines is not in touch with the position.

The Minister for Mines: I travel over the road four times a day.

Mr. MANN: Men are taking the metal from one point to the other.

The Minister for Mines: They are cutting new metal there from to-day.

Mr. MANN: I urge upon the Minister the necessity for completing the work immediately.

The Minister for Railways: I am more anxious to expedite it than anyone else.

Mr. MANN: I refer to Bulwer-street, Newcastle-street and Stirling-street.

The Minister for Mines: We are waiting for the Council to finish Bulwer-street.

Mr. MANN: That road has nothing to do with it. The track has been raised and the metal has been put there. The Minister does not know what he is talking about.

The Minister for Mines: I am not talking of Stirling-street, but of Bulwer-street.

Mr. MANN: And I am talking of Stirling-street. It has been in a dangerous condition for months. Possibly the Minister does not know what it is like. I would urge upon him to have the work done at once.

The Minister for Railways: It is a matter of getting the metal. The City Council said they were going to supply us, but they have not done so.

Mr. MANN: I know the Minister put the work in hand in order to relieve the unemployment, but surely it will not be left any longer in an unfinished condition. There is not sufficient space for the traffic and the roadway is dangerous for transport.

The Premier: Fortunately Stirling-street is a wide thoroughfare. I agree that it is inconvenient the way it is now.

Mr. Corboy: It is not safe.

Mr. MANN: The eastern side of the road is completely worn away, and a lot of money will have to be spent to put it in order. The question is, how long it will be allowed to remain in that condition.

The Premier: It is at this end of Stirling-street. I go up and down it every day.

Mr. MANN: The street has been in that condition for a long time from the bridge to Lord-street.

The Minister for Railways: I have made representations to the department. It is a question of getting sufficient metal to enable us to get on with the job.

Mr. MANN: There must be some way of overcoming the difficulty. Our suburban train service is not entering seriously enough into competition with the charabancs and taxi service between Fremantle and Midland Junction.

Mr. Marshall: You cannot expect the railways to compete with motor transport over short distances.

Mr. MANN: The hon. member only knows about the bush. With charabancs and taxis there is only one class. There is no differen-

tiation between first and second-class. I suggest that the Minister for Railways confer with the Commissioner with a view to having a one-class railway service in the suburban areas. I think this would render that service far more popular than it is to-day.

Mr. Corboy: I am with you on that point.

Mr. MANN: By that means the suburban railways would enter more closely into competition with taxis and charabancs, without the owners of the motor vehicles being harassed as is the case now. With reasonable and legitimate competition on the part of the railways they would soon knock out these motor vehicles.

Hon. G. Taylor: Why do not the tramways knock them out?

Mr. MANN: They are all of one class.

Hon. G. Taylor: But they do not knock out the competition.

Mr. MANN: The trams are competing with charabancs and taxis.

Hon. G. Taylor: Let the charabancs run along the tramway track. They would soon run the trams off the road.

Mr. MANN: The tramways are competing with and beating the motor services.

Hon. G. Taylor: Because they are not allowed to compete except on by-ways and side-ways.

Mr. MANN: If the Minister would confer with the Commissioner on the question of establishing a one-class service on the suburban railways, it would be the means of defeating the motor service that is to-day competing with the railways for passenger traffic.

Mr. Corboy: The idea of a one-class service is good.

Mr. MANN: People travel in the one class in the taxis, charabancs, and trams. Why should there be two classes on the railway service?

The Premier: A better class of people travel on the railways than by charabanc.

Mr. MANN: I do not think that is so. At all events I submit this suggestion to the Minister. I do not know whether it has already occurred to him.

The Minister for Railways: It has occurred to me. It would reduce our revenue by about 25 per cent.

Mr. MANN: That is very doubtful.

The Minister for Railways: We do not fill up our second-class compartments. What difference would it make if the compart-

ments were all of one class. Some people prefer to travel first-class and to pay more.

Mr. MANN: The Minister might strike a happy medium between the two classes. This service is earning revenue for the State, and it is of the greatest importance that it should be popularised. I wish to refer to the salary of the Secretary for Railways.

The CHAIRMAN: I would not take items at this moment if I were the hon. member.

Mr. MANN: The Secretary for Railways, in comparison with the Under Secretaries for Mines and Works, is at a disadvantage to the tune of something over £100 a year.

The Premier: The two positions cannot be compared.

Mr. Corboy: One man gets free railway passes.

The Premier: Moreover the salary of the Secretary for Railways has been increased of late years.

Mr. MANN: By £50 a year.

Mr. Corboy: And he has many privileges.

The Minister for Railways: He is working up to another maximum.

Mr. MANN: But he is at a disadvantage of over £100 per year as compared with the Under Secretaries for Mines and Public Works.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [11.25]: In discussing Estimates involving huge amounts of money we are handicapped in being without the Auditor General's report. We can only accept the figures from each Minister, who has them carefully prepared and typed, and reads them off. No member can retain them and discuss them. Last year's report of the Auditor General teems with irregularities; but there is no use in discussing them now, as they are two years old.

The Premier: The Auditor General does not deal with the Railway Department.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: We ought to have had his report on the huge expenditure relating to Medical and Health. I emphasise this in the hope that something will be done. If the Auditor General's office is understaffed, why does not he make that fact known to the Premier? I do not desire to move a motion on the subject, hoping that a reference to the absence of the report while the Estimates are being considered will suffice to induce the Auditor General to get a move on. The Premier, of course, has no control over that officer, who is supposed to be the servant of Parliament only.

He does not afford Parliament much help through his report, which is too antiquated by the time it reaches us. It is pleasing to know that this is the only Australian State in the position of having a surplus on its railway accounts. Queensland, indeed, has a deficit of about two millions sterling. Presumably our satisfactory position, with a profit of some £30,000, is due to our having a very capable head of the Railway Department. The departmental heads and the staff, too, must work well together to achieve such a success. Of the salaries under special Acts, that of the Commissioner of Railways is the only one which is not being increased on these Estimates. The Auditor General's salary last year was £800, and this year it is to be £1,000.

The Premier: The Auditor General has been on the £800 mark for over 20 years. Perhaps this increase will provide the necessary stimulus.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Let us hope so. The Minister has eulogised the Commissioner of Railways, and I would have been greatly pleased had these Estimates disclosed some recognition of the services rendered by that officer. From a calendar issued by the Railway Department, showing how its earnings are disposed of, it appears that out of the department's 365 working days the results of only three days reach the Treasurer. Yet we find hon. members declaring that the working costs of the department should be increased by the granting of further privileges to the employees. Apparently some members think the Railway Department should be run for the benefit of the railway employees. If special provision is to be made for railway men, it should be made for all employees of every industry. In that case, all industries would be called upon to provide for their employees when they had become past work. There are between 7,000 and 8,000 men concerned in the Railways, and there are considerably more men than that in outside occupations that are not covered at all. Those outside industries should carry their employees in the same way as the railways are to carry the railway men. I do not intend to say much about the long service question, concerning which so much has been said already. I know that over three years ago it was given out without any hesitation whatever by those who were opposing me in my electorate that the then Leader of the Opposition, the present Pre-

nier, if returned to power, would see to it that the first thing that was done would be to grant long service leave.

The Premier: They had no such statement from me.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I do not know what happened elsewhere. It is all very well to say now—

The Premier: The man who opposed you was half a lunatic.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: They were all lunatics who opposed me during the last 27 years.

The Premier: As a matter of fact, you have been lucky.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: It is passing strange that the Premier's leaders on every occasion have been there to support the lunatics but could not get the people to accept them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The vote has nothing to do with lunatics.

The Premier: It is conceivable that even half a lunatic may be better than some members.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That is so, but the people at Mt. Margaret would have none of your cheap jack democrats! At any rate the statement regarding Labour's intentions in connection with long service leave for the railway men was ladled out, in the presence of the member for Menzies, by my opponent.

Mr. Panton: And I gave him a good tongue-wanging afterwards.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to keep to the Estimates.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: This may be distasteful to the Government and to you, Mr. Chairman, but the statement I have referred to was ladled out on two occasions in order to catch the votes of a few railway men.

Mr. Sleeman: And the Government have carried out the undertaking.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must discuss the Estimates.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Why deny it? That is what I complain of. I hope the Government will make the provision permanent by means of an Act of Parliament, so that the question will not keep coming up at election time. Moreover unless that is done, the concession may be wiped out by some other political party. At any rate I will not help to wipe it out.

Mr. Davy: Fancy making the interests of the railway men an issue at an election!

The Premier: It is ridiculous.

Mr. Davy: Of course it is.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: At any rate it is not much to the credit of the Government that there has been so much delay.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Tramways, £255,500; Electricity Supply, £192,500; State Batteries, £28,779—agreed to.

Vote—Cave House, £14,629:

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [11.36]: When I was at Cave House some time ago it was apparent that more accommodation was required. I do not know whether it has been provided. Certainly I have not read in the Press that the Honorary Minister, Mr. Hickey, has opened a new portion of the hotel or a new bedroom there. Of course, I have read about his having opened a hotel elsewhere.

Mr. Mann: And a State school, too.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Not so many schools as hotels.

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Hickey is the travelling Minister.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I suppose he has reported to the Premier as to whether there have been any improvements carried out at Cave House during the year. If there were double the present accommodation, it would be crowded out for at least three months of the year. I understand an elaborate scheme of improvements was prepared, but I suppose it was so elaborate that it scared Governments off.

The Premier: It is under consideration in connection with the Loan Estimates.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I believe the scheme involved an expenditure of about £27,000 and that was probably the cause of Governments being scared.

The Premier: I do not know what will happen this year. I have not finalised the Loan Estimates yet.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [11.38]: Has the Premier considered the question of leasing the State hotels?

The CHAIRMAN: The vote refers to Cave House and not to State Hotels.

Mr. DAVY: I am dealing with the general in regard to the particulars. Cave House is one of the State hotels and surely I may ask the Premier whether he has considered the leasing of the State hotels, of

which Cave House is one. Has the Premier considered the leasing of Cave House?

The Premier: I am considering it.

Mr. DAVY: May I urge the Premier to consider it with favour, because no one can look at the returns of the State hotels, including Cave House, without realising that, after making proper allowance for amounts that should be paid, the present system is thoroughly unprofitable. State hotels showed some small contribution to the revenue last year, but if proper allowances had been made that contribution would have been ridiculous. I think one small hotel in the hands of private enterprise and situated as favourably as are some of the State hotels, would show as big a profit as all the State hotels put together.

The Minister for Mines: And would charge double the price for accommodation.

Mr. DAVY: I am not sure that the prices charged at State hotels furnish the things the people desire.

The Minister for Mines: There is no better resort than the Cave House in Western Australia.

Mr. DAVY: I agree that it has physical advantages quite unique.

Mr. Panton: Under private enterprise the prices would be doubled.

Mr. DAVY: No. Is the Bruce Rock hotel any cheaper than hotels in Northam?

Mr. Panton: We were talking about the Cave House.

Mr. DAVY: Well, that is incomparable because Nature has conferred on it enormous advantages. If that place were leased it would be run on better lines than it is at present. I do not know that the price is everything. When a man takes himself and his family to Cave House, what he wants is service.

Mr. Chesson: At reasonable prices.

Mr. DAVY: Yes, but that is a secondary consideration. What he wants is first-class service.

Mr. Panton: You want to keep the Cave House for the select few.

Mr. DAVY: Not at all. However, what I rose to ask was whether the Treasurer is seriously considering the putting of the State hotels, including Cave House, into the hands of private enterprise by leasing them, and so making a much greater profit out of the public funds invested in those places.

MR. MANN (Perth) [11.44]: The question is whether Cave House is being run for revenue or for the convenience of the people who desire to use it. If it is for the convenience of the people, it is not filling the bill, for it has not sufficient accommodation. In the season one desiring accommodation there must either put in his application very early or be able to exercise a good deal of influence. Guests there are sleeping on the verandahs, and practically on the roadway. If the place is there for the convenience of the people, it is not filling the bill.

The Minister for Mines: Just the same it is pretty popular.

Mr. MANN: Because it is the only accommodation near to the caves. Really it is the caves that are popular.

The Minister for Mines: There is a private hotel close to the caves at Augusta. It costs one three times as much, and is not nearly so good as the Cave House.

Mr. MANN: The position of the Cave House and the position at Augusta, 70 miles away, cannot be compared. Cave House should be a convenience for those desiring to see the caves, but there is not sufficient accommodation.

The Minister for Mines: I know there is not.

Mr. MANN: Very well, I have gained my point, and the Minister's interjecting has been waste of time. Now if Cave House is being run for revenue it is not filling the bill either, because the Government could get far more from it if it were leased.

Mr. Sleeman: And ordinary plain folk would never get into it.

The Minister for Mines: Only one class would get there if the place were in private hands.

Mr. MANN: Does the Minister mean his own class?

The Minister for Mines: Prior to this year I could not have gone there if the place had been in private hands. Most certainly I could not have gone there on £600 a year.

Mr. MANN: Even as it is, a man on the basic wage could not afford to go there. However, there is not sufficient accommodation for those who desire to go. If the place were twice the size, it would still be filled. If the Government do not intend to increase the accommodation they would be well advised to lease the place, making it a condition that the accommodation should be increased. If they want the tariff

remain reasonable they could make that also a condition of the lease.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [11.49] I quite agree with what has been said about the accommodation at Caves House. It is altogether insufficient for that period of the year embracing the holidays—for some four months or more. I had a holiday there once, and my experience was that the overcrowding was so great that proper service could not be rendered to those that were there. People were sleeping on verandahs and balconies and the place was overcrowded. It would cost £20,000 to £30,000 to provide the necessary accommodation and I think we could find better use for the money than by spending it to provide holiday resorts for the people. I do not know that it is the function of the State to provide, at considerable expense, places where people may spend their holidays. Previous Treasurers have refused to make money available for the purpose and I have refused it each year since I took office. I am rather surprised that another accommodation house has not been established there.

Mr. Mann: A license could not be obtained for it.

The PREMIER: That would be a matter for the licensing bench to decide.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is it not all Crown land there?

The PREMIER: There is plenty of private property around the Cave House. I do not know whether two houses would pay, having regard to the fact that the business would cover only about one-third of the year, but even so, the place is so popular that I believe another house would pay. However, in these times, when money is needed for so many more important purposes, I cannot provide a large sum to make accommodation available for all the people who would care to go there.

Mr. Mann: Why not lease it?

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [11.55]: The Cave House, including the caves of the South-West, etc., is estimated to cost £14,029 this year. The actual revenue in 1926-27 was £16,279. I do not know what the capital cost of the Cave House is or whether any provision is made for meeting obligations connected with capital cost. If such provision has to be made it might be possible to do better by calling tenders for the lease of Cave House.

The Premier: That is the net revenue. Interest is paid as on State hotels plus all charges such as sinking fund and depreciation.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That amount is net to the Treasury?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. Davy: Would there be any account showing the other charges?

The Premier: In the balance sheet of the State hotels are shown interest, sinking fund and other charges.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: We provide salaries amounting to £529, and general development and maintenance, transport, etc., amount to £13,500, making a total of £14,029. The estimated revenue this year is £16,500. Thus we do not earn a great deal on the outlay.

The Premier: It is a business that extends over only a few months.

Mr. Mann: Properly conducted, it would run seven months.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The Minister advanced good argument for not extending the Cave House. The estimated cost of improvements submitted some years ago was about £27,000. Any Treasurer would balk at such a sum, though, if it were made available, many more people would patronise the Cave House. Numbers of people would like to go there for periods from November to April, but they are unable to get accommodation. I believe that all the accommodation for Christmas was booked up in Perth in about two hours.

Mr. Withers: No; in forty minutes.

Mr. Panton: A good deal of preferential booking went on.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That shows the popularity of the place. If there were accommodation for double the number of people, it would be filled right up to Easter. I found it difficult to get accommodation. The Cave House is a fine place, and the accommodation and attention are all that one could desire. I cannot remember having stayed at any hotel or accommodation house where I was better catered for than at the Cave House.

Mr. Davy: You were not there incognito.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: No, I was there in a sac suit.

The Minister for Mines: Ninety-nine out of every hundred patrons are of the same opinion. We have a good man in charge.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: During the fortnight I was there I kept my ears open for com-

plaints and conversed with almost everybody staying there, but not a word of complaint was to be heard.

The Premier: The management always has a difficult task on account of the overcrowding.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That is so. People were sleeping on the verandahs and many were glad to get a shake-down, but the overcrowding did not affect the table. I am sorry the Premier cannot see his way to provide further accommodation, though it seems that nothing tangible could be done without incurring a large outlay. The Government should take all the State hotels into consideration.

MR. MANN (Perth) [12.2]: I suggest that the Premier should spend at least £5,000 on the Cave House.

The Premier: One cannot do anything with that.

Mr. MANN: Is the place to remain for all time in its present condition? The Eastern States are booming their caves and other pleasure resorts. In the holiday season in this State hundreds of people come from the goldfields and the North-West looking for attractive places in which to spend their leisure time, but if they desire to go to Cave House they cannot get accommodation there. The Premier should at least put up another bungalow.

The Premier: That would mean a new kitchen and dining-room.

Mr. MANN: Cave House cannot be allowed to continue in its present obsolete condition.

The Premier: Why does not private enterprise enter the field?

Mr. MANN: Because people could not get a license. If the Premier would indicate to the Licensing Bench his desire that private enterprise should step in, and would give people some security of tenure, even if part of the bargain was that so much money had to be spent on providing the necessary accommodation, no doubt it would be possible without much difficulty to arrange for a lease.

The Premier: It is not for me to make suggestions to the Licensing Bench.

Mr. MANN: The Government are playing the part of dog in the manger in this matter. They will do nothing themselves, and will not allow other people to do anything.

The Premier: There is private property down there all over the place.

Mr. MANN: That may be, but a boarding-house is not a hostel, and the tariff would not be the same. I suggest that the Government should enlarge the present kitchen to enable 20 or 30 more persons to be catered for, and that a new bungalow should be erected.

The Premier: There are scores of holiday resorts around our coast to which people could go.

Mr. MANN: But nothing like Cave House. If the Premier would call for tenders for the leasing of the place for ten years or so, provided the lessee was willing to furnish accommodation for another 50 persons, I am sure he would soon receive a number of applications.

The Premier: Not on the present tariff of 9s. a day.

Mr. MANN: If the Government can make it pay at that figure, private enterprise could do so.

The Premier: I could spend another £20,000 there and make the place pay interest on the amount, if we charged a tariff such as would be charged by private people.

Mr. MANN: The Premier, in making the contract, could specify what tariff should be charged.

The Premier: People could not get accommodation like this anywhere in Australia for less than six guineas a week.

Mr. MANN: If the Government cannot enlarge the present accommodation, they should lease the house under restricted conditions.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £121,411—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—RACING RESTRICTION.

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. North, read a first time.

BILL—LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK (SINKING FUND).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 12.10 a.m. (Thurs.).