

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 16th August, 1906.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUE TION—LAND TAX, FEDERAL.

MR. EWING (for Mr. Barnett) asked the Premier: 1, Is the Government aware of any intention of the Commonwealth to levy a land tax? 2, If so, does the Government propose to test their legal right to impose such a tax under the Federal Constitution?

THE PREMIER replied: No.

QUESTION—IMMIGRANTS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.

MR. HEITMANN asked the Premier: Is it true that many assisted immigrants coming here to settle on the land have been advised by the Superintendent of the Government Labour Bureau to look for employment in or about the City of Perth.

THE PREMIER replied: No.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR MINES: Papers dealing with the granting of exemption on the Peak Hill G.M. Ltd.; moved for by Mr. Holman.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: Annual Report of Goldfields Water Supply Administration.

BILL—FREMANTLE JOCKEY CLUB TRUST FUNDS.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price) in moving the second reading said: This measure was introduced in another place by an hon. member, at whose request I have taken charge of it in this House. Some years ago there existed at Fremantle a jockey club. Its

racecourse was at Woodman's Point; but in process of time it was deemed advisable that the Government should resume the ground for public purposes, and a sum of £1,000 was paid to the jockey club by way of compensation. After the club had paid its liabilities, it found itself possessed of a sum of £250, which was placed on deposit at a bank in the name of Messrs. E. Solomon, R. Holmes, and J. J. Higham. The club, as a matter of fact, is now defunct; but the funds which were placed on deposit now amount to £280, and the trustees desire to pay this money over to the Fremantle Municipal Council in order that improvements may be effected to permanent reserve A6638, which is used for recreation and golfing purposes. It is just possible there may be some individuals, members of the club, who are not known to the trustees; and unless the trustees have the authority of an Act of Parliament to make this payment to the council, it is possible that at some future date claims may be made upon them. So far as the trustees are aware, no one exists who has any right or claim to this money; and in their opinion the payment of the money to the council for the purpose I have mentioned is a highly desirable object. I am sure no one will object to this procedure, and I confidently move the second reading.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): I would like some member to move the adjournment of the debate. My reasons are that I would like to have from the Minister who has introduced this Bill some information as to the necessity for the measure being brought forward.

THE MINISTER: I have explained that it is in case any future claims be made on the trustees; but they know of no such claims.

MR. BATH: We should have some information in regard to the way in which the land was obtained by the jockey club. I presume it was a grant in the first instance.

THE MINISTER: There is no land at all. They have funds only.

MR. BATH: Have they no land as a racecourse?

THE PREMIER: No. This money was to the credit of the late club, and the trustees wish to give the money to the council.

MR. BATH: But if a jockey club is in existence, and it has funds—

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not in existence.

MR. BATH: Well, if it has been in existence, surely the club has some race-course.

THE MINISTER: The club has no race-course.

MR. HUDSON: What evidence is there that the club is dead?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is dead.

MR. STONE: Why should the money not be paid into consolidated revenue, instead of to the municipality?

On motion by MR. DAGLISH, debate adjourned.

BILL—MINES REGULATION.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from the previous Tuesday.

MR. C. A. HUDSON (Dundas): It is a matter for congratulation that we have before us at an early stage in the session such a substantial measure dealing with such an important subject as that of the regulation of mining in this State. The Bill as presented to the House has many imperfections, and I have no doubt that in the course of its stages it will be so treated by members that it will become a useful measure after having been modified and extended. It is a pity that stringent measures such as this have become necessary in a State like Western Australia, in our advanced stage of civilisation; but while there are in the community unscrupulous mining managers who allow their desire to satisfy the cupidity of their employers and reduce cost at all hazards to override their better judgment and good sense, and indeed their regard for the safety of the workers, it becomes incumbent upon the Legislature to enforce by enactment some provisions for the protection of the lives of the workers and for securing better conditions in their employment. I do not wish it to be understood that I am making any sweeping allegations of dereliction of duty on the part of mine managers generally. Indeed, I believe there are many who are not opposed to the regulations that are now imposed upon them. There are many conscientious men who welcome

some form of restraint and are glad to have established some degree of uniformity in the conduct of their business. It must be admitted also that among the workmen themselves there are some who from mere thoughtlessness are led into serious errors of conduct. They become heedless of the responsibilities that are cast upon them by the nature of their employment and the circumstances surrounding the industry. Fortunately these also are few, and form a very small fraction of the number engaged in the industry. But while we have, even in small numbers, reckless and inhumane managers and careless workmen, it is the duty of the Legislature to interfere, and I trust that the House will take serious notice of this Bill and give it careful and guarded consideration, so that when it becomes a legal enactment it will be a useful and satisfactory measure. It has been admitted that this is a Bill which might better be dealt with in its Committee stage, and therefore I do not propose to deal with it at length at this stage, but to treat it afterwards with greater consideration and greater care. There are a few principles involved in it to which I wish to draw the attention of members. The Minister for Mines has recognised the necessity for check inspectors, and he is to be commended for having made provision in the Bill for their appointment; but it is a pity that, whilst admitting the principle, he has not shown a greater resolution in furnishing methods for its application. In this Bill the powers of check inspectors are so circumscribed with conditions that there is very great danger of their functions being rendered ineffectual and inoperative; and I hope the Minister will have regard to the observations that have been made by members who have an intimate knowledge of the subject and practical experience, and who have suggested a course of procedure which should be adopted in the appointment and payment of check inspectors. I urge this upon the Minister because I know there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in connection with the inspection of mines, not only on the part of the managers themselves, but also on the part of the men; and in making provisions in laws for regulating mining it has to be taken into account that these laws apply in out-

lying places of the State, and whilst a check inspector may be present, the general inspector may not visit the place for months at a time. If a check inspector were appointed and were paid equally by the Government and by the union, he would be always available in cases of accidents, and he would be available also in case of any complaint being made by the men in the absence of the usual Government inspector. I must confess that I was unable to follow the reasoning of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) the other evening when he spoke of the mining in the State of Western Australia as being behind the times. I think that the mining in this State—I am speaking with my limited knowledge—is far ahead of that in most places in Australia, and indeed other parts of the world. If the hon. member had said that the conditions of life on the fields were different from those of other parts of Australia and other parts of the world, I would have been with him, because the different conditions of life on the goldfields of Western Australia emphasise the arguments which have been used in opposition to Sunday labour. I differ from the hon. member also as to his statement that the abolition of Sunday labour might have a tendency to reduce the output of gold from Western Australia. I say that even if it be so, Sunday labour is too high a price to pay for the doubtful advantage of a slight increase in the output. The conditions of life on the fields demand that men should have recreation and rest, and whilst I am not speaking from any sentiment on the subject—because it matters not to me for the purpose of my argument in any way whether the employee spends his time in his religious devotions or in the indulgence of sport on the fields, and I think we ought to extend the greatest tolerance in both directions—I am certainly of opinion that Sunday labour should be abolished, if possible. If it cannot be abolished altogether, it should be minimised as far as possible, and permission for Sunday labour should only be granted in extreme cases of urgency and necessity. I hope the Bill will be amended in that part of it so that there will be greater restrictions on the employment of men on Sundays. The measure raises another vexed question,

that of the employment of foreigners. This subject is very difficult to handle; but with the provisions of the Bill I think that members will agree. For my part, however, I think the measure should go much farther. It is very well to provide that certain men employed underground must be able to read, write, and speak the English language; but I would go farther and say that no man who cannot speak the English language shall be employed in any capacity on a mine, and especially when there are men out of employment who can speak the language and who are capable of performing the work. I do not wish to enter into detail; indeed I do not intend to discuss the measure at any length on the second reading. But I should like to illustrate the possibility of an accident on a mine which employs, even on the surface, foreigners who are unable to speak the language. Assume that the manager in charge does speak the language. If a serious accident occurred, and the services of the other men employed on the surface were required to save life or to prevent the possibility of farther danger, the consequences would be very serious if the other men on the surface were unable to understand English; and I intend, when that part of the measure comes before us in Committee, to deal with it very stringently. Finally, I wish to refer to the extraordinary provisions made in this measure for the extension and restriction, indeed the amendment and repeal, of specific enactments by regulations. I say that the Act itself should be paramount, and that the regulations should be subservient to the Act; otherwise our efforts to make this an effective measure will be utterly futile, and the Act will be practically at the mercy and subject to the mere caprice of the Minister for the time being. For that reason careful attention should be given to some provisions empowering the Minister, by regulation, to amend or repeal, extend, or restrict, practically the bulk of the measure. This was perhaps one of the measures that the Premier had in mind to-day when, speaking at a function, he invited review and criticism. The Bill certainly has many imperfections; but I can assure the Minister that from me it will not meet with any captious criticism. Indeed,

I shall endeavour to assist in making it a useful measure, which will accomplish the ends and attain the objects for which it was intended. I purpose supporting the second reading.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (West Perth): It is only about one or two points that I desire to express my opinion on this Bill, except by saying that its being a consolidation is an advantageous circumstance, and that the amendments proposed will, I think, be very valuable to the mining industry. My objection, however, principally applies to Clause 6 of the Bill. I may be incorrect, but I think I am right when I say that the effect of this clause will be to establish by statute the position of State Mining Engineer. It is with me a serious question whether we should by statute establish such a position. Our doing so means that at a later date we cannot get rid of the State Mining Engineer, at any rate not of the position though we may of the man, without an Act of Parliament passed by both Houses. Now the State gets on very well under Ministerial control; and it does not seem to me desirable that we should in this Bill establish a position which we may or may not desire to continue at a later date. I do not see that Clause 6 is at all necessary for the purposes of the Bill; therefore I think it desirable that in Committee the clause should be either entirely obliterated or altered in such a manner as to leave the control of the position in the hands of the Minister. As to Sunday labour on mines, I am strongly opposed to its continuance without very distinct necessity. It seems to me we are carrying things too far when we want men to work seven days a week. This is simply the thin end of a very dangerous wedge. Miners first of all work on Sunday because of a supposed necessity. Other men who wait on the miners are expected to work also for the miners' convenience; and from one thing to another we march on until we desecrate and destroy the day of rest and day of recreation. I think that all our efforts should be directed to restricting Sunday labour. In the past, circumstances have almost compelled us to depart from the best of rules; but I think that in all our legislation we should

endeavour little by little to restrict Sunday labour in every possible occupation. Of course, I have seen some figures setting forth the loss that may take place in consequence of work on the mines being stopped on Sundays. Well, that applies to every industry. It applies to a factory, to a woollen mill, a cotton mill, to any other mill you like to mention. You can calculate that more work can be done in seven days than in six, just as you can calculate that more can be done in six days than in five. That argument applies to every occupation we can name. One of the grandest institutions of humanity has been a seventh day of rest. No matter whether it be Sunday, Friday, Saturday, or any other day, it is one of the grandest institutions we have; and interference with it is on every occasion to the risk and danger of the people. I hope that in respect of this industry every effort will be made to restrict rather than extend any infringement of the day of rest. It seems to me that there is no necessity for all the liberty given in the Bill. I desire to congratulate the Minister on his providing that men working in mines must speak the English language. When the first trouble arose many years ago in Day Dawn, as the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) will recollect, I made a suggestion, not only at a public meeting but to the then Minister for Mines, that the best method of restricting the dangers arising out of the employment of foreign labour was to insist that all men working upon a mine should speak the English language. So far we are going a long way in that direction, and I congratulate the Minister on his efforts; but I think we might continue our progress to the extent suggested. Men who on the surface have charge of machinery, upon the proper working of which the lives of the men below depend, should be able to understand orders given them, and to read the regulations posted up. I think that in this direction the Bill may be extended. These are the three matters with which I wish to deal. Possibly, when the Bill is in Committee, I may be in the Chair; hence I should like other members to bring them up at the proper time. Having mentioned these points, I have every pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

MR. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet): With the other members who have spoken from either side of the House, I desire to congratulate the Minister on the early introduction of this Bill; and I hope that on this occasion the Bill will meet with a better fate than on the two preceding occasions when it was introduced in this House.

MR. HORAN: Whose fault was that?

MR. TROY: I believe it was introduced first by the present Minister (Hon. H. Gregory), when he was a member of the James Government. Again it was introduced last year by Mr. Hastie; and I find on comparing the Bills that there is very little difference between them. The present Minister has in certain directions gone rather farther than Mr. Hastie, but in other respects he has not gone quite so far as that gentleman provided in his measure. The present Bill has been traversed from almost every standpoint by members who spoke before me, and a great deal of light has been thrown on the subjects by the members for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan), Cue (Mr. Heitmann), and Murchison (Mr. Holman), and by others on this side of the House who are intimately acquainted with every particular of the mining industry. They have shown where the Bill can be improved, and I am sure the Minister, regarding this Bill in no party spirit, and members on this side of the House also regarding it in no party spirit, will agree with the amendments that are to be offered in Committee. It must be remembered that members on this side of the House, particularly those representing the Eastern Goldfields and the Cue Division, are members who have, during the greater part of their lives, been associated with this industry, and therefore are more competent to give an opinion in connection with matters dealt with in the various clauses than are other members of the House. The object of the Bill is to provide for the greater safety and comfort of persons employed in the mining industry; and after all this should be the chief endeavour of any Government in any State. We want to provide that the miner in this State shall not, at the age of 30 or 35 years, be practically an old man, as is the case in the Eastern States. We should endeavour to provide means which will enable the miner to be able to follow his calling at the age at

which other persons engaged in other industries can follow their callings; and I believe that if we improve the sanitation and ventilation of our mines—and after all that is the most important portion of this measure—we shall do a good deal towards securing that end. I desire to point out a few defects which have from time to time during my residence on the goldfields come to my knowledge, and in these respects I hope that in Committee the Bill will be amended to provide for the remedying of those defects. I hold that the Inspector of Mines should not be asked to give 24 hours' notice of his intention to visit a mine; because during the interval between his giving such notice and his visiting the mine, the manager can easily see that the mine is put into a fit condition to be inspected. The mine may have been in a shocking condition prior to the receiving of notice; but 24 hours give sufficient time for a manager to have the mine put in order.

THE MINISTER: He is not supposed to give any notice.

MR. TROY: I was saying that if he had to give such notice. It must be remembered that some inspectors, such as in remote districts, visit the mine only once in three months; and although three months before a mine might be in a shocking state, yet the manager can put the mine in order when he knows the inspector is coming. I am glad to have the Minister's assurance that notice need not be given. In connection with the provision that it shall be the duty of the inspector to take a statement from any injured worker, I hold this opinion, and I hope the Minister will agree to the provision being made here also, that the inspector should always invite an agent of the worker who has been injured to be present when the statement is taken, and the secretary of the local union is in most instances the agent of the workers. Even if the injured worker does not happen to be a member of a union, so far as my knowledge goes he always asks the secretary of the nearest union to act as his agent. So when an inspector is going to take the statement of an injured worker, he can easily give notice of his intention to the secretary of the union, or to some friend of the worker, to attend and take a copy of

the statement. During the time I have been representing many miners in this House, I have had brought under my notice instances in which an inspector has taken a statement from an injured worker which, on being perused later by that worker, has been found to be not what he had thought it was. There is in Perth at the present time a man who was some little time ago injured at the Great Fingal mine at Day Dawn. The inspector took that man's statement at a time when he was in great pain and not fit to make a statement; and that worker now denies or says he has no knowledge of having given that statement, or had no notion of what was contained in the statement. And yet that statement has been used, and is to be used, in evidence in the Supreme Court against him. It is unfair to take such statements while a worker is lying injured and in no fit condition to make a statement.

MINISTER: It may be necessary, in the case of a serious accident. It may result in a criminal charge.

MR. TROY: But it would be a very easy matter for the inspector to give notice to the secretary of the union that he intended to take a statement.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: An injured man may die in a few hours.

MR. TROY: But the man has always got friends. If the secretary of the union is not available, there is always some friend of the injured man who can act with the inspector in taking the statement. Whilst on the subject of accidents, I think it should be provided that on every mine, particularly on large mines, a bracedman should always be employed. Lately an accident occurred at the Fingal Mine, in which a miner named Nankervis was seriously injured through a trucker acting as bracedman. The trucker, who knew nothing about signals, gave a wrong signal, with the result that the cage instead of going down to the 500ft. level struck the barriers at the 200ft. level; and Mr. Nankervis met with a serious accident, from the results of which he will never recover. This accident was caused by the fact that a platman was not employed there; a trucker was doing the work of trucker and platman. In small mines no difficulty is experienced in employing platmen. In all the small mines about Cue—and the great

majority of the mines there are small—platmen are always employed. But in the larger mines, especially in the Fingal, truckmen are employed to do the work, simply because they are paid 1s. per shift less than platmen. We should see that there are platmen on all occasions on these big mines, to provide against such accidents occurring. Again, provision is made in this measure that if a mine is found to be in a bad or unsafe condition, a worker can give notice of the fact to the inspector, and the inspector must not divulge the informant's name. That is a wise provision, certainly; but will it act? So far as I know, no worker is likely to give the inspector his name, because he is not satisfied that it will not be divulged; and if it were divulged, there would be no possibility of that worker obtaining employment at any mine in the vicinity in the future. There was one exception. In the case of Mr. Greenard, who was for many years on the Murchison, the miners had such faith in that inspector that they would tell him; no miner was afraid to tell Mr. Greenard anything, because they had absolute faith in him.

MR. TAYLOR: He was a good man, a good man for the Government and for the men.

MR. TROY: He was a good man; and I want to bear testimony to the good character he bears among the miners on the Murchison Goldfield. Without saying anything disrespectful of the general run of inspectors, I want to say that so far as my knowledge goes and so far as I have seen, there are very few miners who will give information to inspectors, because the miners have not that implicit faith in them which they had in Mr. Greenard. With regard to the provision for the appointment of check inspectors, I like the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) do not know how it is going to work out, unless the check inspectors are paid. I agree with the member for Ivanhoe that the check inspectors should be paid, half by the Government and half by the union; and in such circumstances I believe the proposal would work well on the Eastern Goldfields, particularly on the Boulder belt. There would be a difficulty, however, in the remoter districts such as the Murchison, North Coolgardie, and East Murchison

fields. On those fields it would be impossible to provide check inspectors in the manner suggested by the member for Ivanhoe. This difficulty might however be overcome by appointing the secretary of the union to act as check inspector on all occasions in those districts. The secretary of the union, and I think the Minister will agree with me, is the person who is always requested or nominated by the miners at public meetings to act on their behalf.

THE MINISTER: But he may not necessarily have mining knowledge.

MR. TROY: In the majority of cases the secretary of the union is possessed of mining knowledge. With probably one exception, all the secretaries of unions whom I know on the Murchison are persons possessed of a very comprehensive knowledge of mining. Take the secretary of the whole of the unions in the Murchison district: he would suit very well, because he is not employed by any company; and even if it were necessary for him to make a long journey, even 100 miles, he could at a few minutes' notice mount his motor bicycle and by this means be where his services were required in a few hours. He has a comprehensive knowledge of the mining industry and its conditions; and were his expenses paid or even partly paid by the Government, then this provision would be of some use. But unless that is done, the provision is not going to work well; because no person will take the responsible duty of saying whether a mine is in a good or bad condition, if he depends on the manager of that mine for his living. No person who is employed in mines is going to take upon himself the responsible duty of check inspector, if by doing so he will lay himself open to dismissal. He would want a large consideration. This is a position which will more and more obtain, because to a large extent the principal mines at East Murchison are falling into the hands of two or three individuals, and those individuals will black-ball any person who does anything detrimental to their interests.

MR. TAYLOR: That is being done continually now.

MR. TROY: It is being done now, and will be done more and more in the future. Again, the Chamber of Mines is the governing body of all the mining

companies in the State; and because it receives the sanction of the Chamber of Mines this system will more and more prevail in connection with prospecting shows, with people who own their own properties in this State, once they become connected with that chamber. That has not been done in the past; but so soon as those owners join the Chamber of Mines, so soon do they act in the same manner as the larger companies. They black-ball their employees in every way, and generally act jointly with the Chamber of Mines in every matter. So that unless provision is made for the payment of these check inspectors, in order to make them independent of the mine managers, this provision will do no good whatever. I do not think it right that one-sixth of the workers employed in a mine should be the number required for the appointment of check inspectors, because it is impossible to get one-sixth of the men employed in a mine to attend general meetings. It must be remembered that there are only probably half-a-dozen or perhaps 20 men employed in the mine, and they may be the only men affected. The surface men would not be affected, and they would actually say on every occasion. "It is no concern of ours; let those who are affected attend the meeting; they will do all that is required." Again, in connection with a union this Bill provides that if the union calls a meeting, at least 20 members must be present. But on some of our mines, particularly on mines that have been closed for some time and are being reopened—and it is on these mines that the dangerous places exist—the unions do not comprise more than 20 members. To be registered a union need only embrace 15 members; and it would be wise to provide that so long as a union calls a meeting, which it will not do unless there is good reason, the union shall have power to appoint these check inspectors. Let us take the Peak Hill mine for instance. It is a large mine, but has been lying idle for about two years. Just now there are not more than 20 persons working on the mine putting it in order. They have been sent to the mine to insure that it is safe for working, and they are fixing up the dangerous spots. Should an accident occur there now every man employed on the mine

would need to be present at the meeting to appoint a check inspector. This shows that the clause will work badly, and I hope the Minister will provide that as long as the union calls a meeting, the union should have the power to appoint the check inspectors. There is great need for an increase in the staff of inspectors of mines. The work they have to do now is too much; the districts they have to travel are too great, and the number of mines they have to inspect is altogether too large. The district covered by the inspector of mines on the Murchison embraces all the country from Yalgoo in the south to Peak Hill in the north, and by the time the inspector gets round that immense district about three months have elapsed. No inspector can give satisfactory attention to the inspection of mines in any one locality if he can only visit the district once in every three or four months. Also there is the instance of the East Murchison district. I believe Mr. Deeble is the inspector there. He has to travel over that great goldfield as well as over the Black Range Goldfield. It is altogether too much for a man to do, and the Minister would do well to appoint a few more inspectors. The work would then be more satisfactorily attended to than it is now. In many cases where accidents take place in a locality and the inspector is at the time on his circuit, the warden has asked some mine manager to inspect the locality and act in the place of the inspector of mines. That system is bad. The warden might just as well appoint a miner, for the miner could do the work just as well. In fact a miner could make a more thorough inspection and a better record in regard to an accident and its cause than a manager could, because mine managers know very little about the practical working of a mine, while a miner has an intimate knowledge of the whole proceedings. Therefore, the miner would be the best person to be appointed by the warden to report in the absence of the inspector of mines on any portion of a mine where the accident occurred. Some mine managers have never worked in a mine. I know some have not, and as a result they are not competent to take the place of an inspector of mines to investigate the occurrence of an accident. The member for Cue said that no shaft should

be sunk to a greater depth than 250 feet without a penthouse. I heartily agree with his contention. The member for Coolgardie said that it would be a great hardship on the prospectors if penthouses had to be provided; but there are few prospectors who sink shafts to a greater depth than 250 feet. If any person continues the development of his property by sinking a shaft to a greater depth than 250 feet he has got a long way beyond the prospecting stage, and the mine can be classed with the other going concerns. Prospectors generally sink their shafts to 200 feet, and that is about the greatest depth to which they can safely go. If shafts are sunk over 250 feet, penthouses should be provided. Unless that is done the miner is working under cages drawing ore and other material from the levels above, and the miner works underneath this without any safeguard. We should not allow that, because accidents occur in shafts more frequently than in any other part of the mine. A pebble may fall from the ore being raised, and if it fell 400ft. or 500ft. it could inflict a fatal wound. A hammer on the knocker line may fall off. The brace-man putting drills or other mining materials into the trucks may probably by accident let a drill fall. If he does, that is the last of the miner beneath.

MR. TAYLOR: If it happened to hit a man it would go through him.

MR. TROY: Such accidents occur frequently. I have never yet known a party of miners to sink a shaft but one or other has met with some accident. Accidents are always occurring in shafts where no protection is placed above the men who are working. So I think penthouses should be provided, and I hope that the Minister will agree to our request that they should be provided below 250ft.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: We will make a special provision in regard to penthouses.

MR. TROY: With other hon. members who have spoken, I am pleased that provision has been made for regulating Sunday labour. I hold that it is unnecessary to employ labour on mines on Sundays to the extent it has been done in the past. I notice that the Minister has exempted plants employed on continuous processes. The only just exemption

necessary that I can see is in connection with smelting works. There should be no exemption in connection with the cyanide process, because the mines have only to enlarge their plants to get the same amount treated in six days as they can now by working seven days. Sunday work will always obtain unless we take some action to check it. The Minister has said that it would be impossible to prohibit Sunday labour on continuous processes on the big mines of this State, because they have not sufficient surface area to provide for additional machinery; but new localities are opening up from day to day. At Black Range I expect to see in the next two or three years large companies in operation and large plants turning out gold. Therefore, if provision is made now preventing these mines from working their employees on Sundays on cyanide plants particularly, it will be found that the gold production will not suffer in consequence. Most members have had experience of Sunday labour. I myself worked a full year every day in the week, and to my mind it is absolute slavery. One is fit for nothing at the end of six months. He is more like a machine than a human being. As we were living in a remote district, we had to go out and chop wood on a Sunday and to bring it in, so that we could keep the machinery going through the week.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Another man could have done that work and left you the Sunday.

MR. TROY: Certainly. It was an experience I have no desire to repeat. It does one no good. It makes one more like a machine than a man, and it is absolute slavery. Anyone with experience of Sunday work for a time will gladly hail this provision in the Bill, but I wish to see it farther extended. With regard to the action taken regulating the employment of foreigners in our mines, I consider that this should have been done long ago. I remember the case referred to by the member for West Perth. At Day Dawn a great proportion of the men on the Fingal mine were Italians, and a large percentage of them were unable to speak the English language. The same conditions obtained at Lennonville on the Long Reef mine four years ago, because 95 per cent. or I believe 100 per cent.

of the men employed on that mine were Italians. I remember an excuse that was given for the employment of Italians. On one occasion a manhole was left open by the neglect of an employee, and an Italian fell down 200 feet and was killed. When referring to the matter later on, the manager said, "We did not have to pay anything in the way of compensation, because he was only an Italian. That is the best of Italians. If they are killed there is no more about it." The Italians were ignorant of the law and did not take action because they knew nothing about compensation being due to them or about the law providing for taking action against a company. As a result the manager dismissed the matter in an airy manner. The man was an Italian and the matter was closed. That is why Italians were employed, because they were useful in the hands of any person who could use them for any purpose. I am pleased the Minister has made this provision in the Bill, but I hope that he will extend the provision so that persons who do not understand the English language shall not work amongst machinery nor work underground. With the loud clanging of machinery one cannot hear a person speak unless he yells at the top of his voice, a foot away from you; and a person must be very intelligent to carry out work among machinery. It would not do for one to work with a person with whom he could not converse, or by some sign or other make himself understood by that person. So I hope the provision will be extended to apply to persons working among machinery as well as underground. Generally speaking I agree fully with the main aspects of the Bill, and with other hon. members I hope that the measure will be amended in Committee so that the experience of Opposition members may be availed of in order that the Bill may be made more perfect. The payment of wages fortnightly is provided for, but, if I am not mistaken, it was provided for previously. When the Daglish Government was in office it was provided that the Minister could compel mining companies to pay wages bi-monthly.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: But it was left out of last year's Bill.

MR. TROY: I know that it was provided for, because on the Fingal mine

the men were paid monthly and the people at Day Dawn were always advocating fortnightly payments. Managers had a strong objection to fortnightly pays, saying they would need a larger staff. It was just the same argument as they will put forward when we say that they must not employ men on Sunday. But the Government said that they had to do it, and they did it. That has caused no greater inconvenience, as I feel sure this will not cause any greater inconvenience. I again desire to congratulate the Minister on the early introduction of this Bill, and I feel sure that members on that side as well as this will do all they can when the Bill is in Committee to make it more perfect than it is at the present time.

MR. P. COLLIER (Boulder): The discussion that has taken place on this measure has been of such a full and complete nature that there is very little left for one to say, except by going over ground that has been already covered. I desire to re-echo the congratulations of members on this (Opposition) side of the House upon the early introduction of the measure by the Minister. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that there is not a more important Bill than this particular measure likely to be introduced during the whole of this session. While the House is almost invariably engaged in dealing with measures more affecting the rights of property, perhaps, this is a Bill which particularly affects the health and life of thousands of our citizens. Therefore, I hope that members, and particularly those on the opposite side of the House, will give the measure their very earnest consideration. The member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan) has so completely covered the ground in connection with this Bill that it is my intention to refer to only three or four points. The most important provision in the Bill, so far as the men engaged on our mines is concerned, is that relating to inspections. There cannot be any doubt that up to the present the inspections of our mines have not been as they should have been. I do not wish to cast any reflection upon the gentlemen holding the positions of inspectors of mines, but I say that the work has been too much for the number

of inspectors employed. With regard to the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts there are two inspectors who have to care for the lives of about three thousand men employed underground. It is utterly impossible for two men to do adequate justice to their position in that respect. I have been underground in the mines in Boulder for some time, and I know from my own personal knowledge—and every man who has worked underground knows also—that every day things are taking place which ought not to occur. Nearly every day the underground boss would come round, and if we were working in some place which perhaps the inspector would not pass, he would say "The inspector is coming round to-morrow. Tidy things up, and put the house in order, as it were." When the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) was speaking, the Minister interjected "That is not the law." But it has been the practice. It is the practice at the present day for the inspectors to give notice to the managers that they intend to visit the mine. This is essential because they would not have sufficient time if it were otherwise. If they came round and visited a mine on the spur of the moment, it might take the whole of the day before they could find the manager and get underground; so in order to save time they invariably, the day before or perhaps two or three days before, send word to the manager that it is their intention to visit the mine. I think members will agree with me that no system of inspection can be complete when the managers know beforehand that the inspector is going to come along.

MR. GULL: Would it be hard to inspect the mine without notice?

MR. COLLIER: There would be no difficulty, if there were sufficient inspectors. An inspector could come to the mine, get the manager, and go underground, and there would be no difficulty. The present system is adopted simply to save time. I briefly wish to refer to one or two accidents that have taken place in our mines, which will show that the inspection has not been as complete as it might have been. Some 18 months ago, in the Boulder Deep Levels, men were working at a depth of about 900 feet without a penthouse. The inspector came round and gave notice for a penthouse to be erected in the shaft. He called a

fortnight afterwards, and they were still working, but nothing had been done. He again warned the manager to put up a penthouse. Nothing was done until six weeks later. The rope broke and the bucket fell to the bottom, killing a man. Had the instructions of the inspector been complied with in the first instance, that man's life would have been saved, for there would have been a penthouse in the shaft.

MR. GULL: Was he not prosecuted?

MR. COLLIER: He was, and I will read the report, so that you will see what the result was. The prosecution was very poor compensation to the friends of the man who was killed. With regard to the cessation of work, the inspector should have absolute power to order the mine to stop work at once, if he thinks it is unsafe. If the inspector had power in this instance, he should have stopped the work in that mine. If he had power and did not stop it, he neglected his duty.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I think he had the power.

MR. COLLIER: If he had the power, he neglected his duty; because on three different occasions, extending over a period of six weeks, he ordered a penthouse to be put up in the shaft, and that was not done. In the report of the Department of Mines, the Mining Engineer refers to this case, and this is what he says:—

There were not many prosecutions during 1905 for breaches of the Mines Regulation Act. In the East Coolgardie field they were instituted in four instances. The first was against the manager and underground manager of the Boulder Deep Levels mine for neglect to keep the winding rope in good order and condition, and negligence, as a result of which one Albert Sergeant was killed. The manager was fined £25, with costs £11 17s., and the underground manager £10 on each of two charges, with costs £11 17s.

In this case the manager was afterwards brought up on a charge of manslaughter, and he was only acquitted on a technical point, namely that he had already been tried on the same charge and had been fined. It is safe to say that the neglect in this instance was of such a nature that, had he not been brought up and fined, he would have stood a very good chance of serving a term of imprisonment. From my experience of the mines,

I believe that nothing will bring the managers to a sense of their duty with regard to the lives and health of the men employed until two or three of them are sent to prison. With regard to the question of penthouses, the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) the other night seemed to treat this matter in a light fashion. He said that the matter of penthouses and the inspection of ropes were mere trifles which might be left to the discretion of the inspector. I am surprised at any member of this House saying that a matter which involves, twice every day, the life of 3,000 men, is a trifle. Every day 3,000 men go down the mines on the Eastern Goldfields and come up again, and their lives depend absolutely and entirely on the safety of these ropes. There is nothing of more importance in the Bill than the safety and testing of these ropes; yet the member for Coolgardie tells us that it is a mere trifle that might well be left to the discretion of the inspector. He also said that if the erection of penthouses were compulsory, it would most likely be a hardship on the prospectors. Surely the hon. member ought to know that those who go more than 200ft. deep cannot be classed as prospectors; and there is no desire on the part of the union or those agitating for penthouses in shafts to enforce that provision in any shaft at a less depth than 200 feet. I would like to say that whilst I believe the Minister is honestly trying to bring forward a Bill which will give satisfaction to both sides, I regret exceedingly that he has not seen his way clear to make provision for the appointment of check inspectors, as desired by the unions. There is no point in the Bill which is of more importance than that. I am glad that the Minister intends to be present at a conference of the Miners' Union; and I am satisfied that as a result of that conference he will come back to this House convinced of the necessity of having such a provision as the Miners' Union desires. The clause as it stands is of no use. It would be necessary, in order to comply with it, to be calling meetings every night in the week. First of all a complaint must come from men engaged in the mines. Then a meeting must be called, of which 24 hours' notice has to be given. In cases like this they would need to be calling meetings every night

in the week. It is not possible to do such a thing as that. The unions do not desire to impose hardships on the mines; in fact, if they cannot get assistance, they are prepared to pay the wages of check inspectors themselves. At the last conference of the Federated Miners' Union, only two months ago, a motion was moved that the check inspectors be paid by the Government alone. That was rejected. The union ask for a subsidy of say about half the amount they pay the check inspectors, but failing to obtain a subsidy, they are quite willing to pay the whole amount themselves, rather than lose the provision. The Minister the other night thought there might be some difficulty in relation to the outback centres, and I admit that there would be; but in cases of large centres like Kalgoorlie and Boulder, where there are so many men employed, surely we can have the provision; and other arrangements can be made for outback and scattered districts. I would like to say also that the Royal Commission, which was a thoroughly representative body, recommended, as the Minister knows, the appointment of these check inspectors in accordance with the agitation which has been going on for some time by the Miners' Union. The accidents in our mines have been increasing. In 1904 there were 153 injured, and in 1905, 270, this being an increase in 1905 over 1904 of 117; and this is notwithstanding the fact that the number of men employed underground has decreased. That surely proves the necessity for a greater inspection or, as we contend, for the appointment of check inspectors. Another question of very great importance to men engaged underground is that of the height of stopes. In our Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines, where the desire is to get out as great amount of stuff as possible—and this cannot be denied—I have known stopes carried as high as 28ft. and 30ft. I would appeal to members on that (Government) side of the House, how is it possible to test ground when it is 28ft. or 30ft. over one's head? It could only be done by rigging up and erecting stages, and we know that at the present day competition is so keen that men will not take the time to do that. The member for Leonora (Mr. Lynch) stated the other

night that the practice of the men employed in the Oroya is to carry stopes not more than 12ft. I think that is a very fair provision. It would give the men a fair opportunity of testing the ground overhead, and would result in preventing many accidents which now take place. There is another matter of great importance: the question of Sunday labour. I sincerely hope that there will be enough members on the Government side willing to assist the Opposition to do away altogether with Sunday labour on mines. I know a good deal about the question. I have worked for twelve months at a time without one holiday; and those men on the fields who have to toil week in and week out are nothing more than white slaves. Surely we are not to sacrifice our health, our Sunday, our Christianity as it were, in the interest of dividends. There is surely something greater, something more important to live for than the mere paying of dividends. I worked at one battery where 120 men were employed; and it was not necessary for one man out of the 120 to work at all on Sunday. Such work for instance as carting firewood to the boiler could have been done on any other day of the week; but it was put off until Sunday because if a sufficient quantity had been carted on Saturday to last until Monday, it would perhaps have had to be tipped out 10 or 15 feet from the boiler, and this would have necessitated the extra labour of a man for an hour or two to bring it within reach of the fireman.

MR. GULL: Would it meet your case if a man worked only six consecutive shifts?

MR. COLLIER: No; not if he did not have the Sunday off.

MR. GULL: So long as he had one day off per week?

MR. COLLIER: No; that would not do. The Bill provides that each man shall have one day off in a fortnight, but does not provide that he shall have a Sunday; and the mine managers will take good care that they do not lose their Sunday labour. At the mine I have mentioned, if a man stayed away on a week-day and came next morning with any sort of reasonable excuse, it was accepted; but if he stayed away on a Sunday he was instantly dismissed on Monday morning. That rule was strictly

enforced, because the management did not wish to water down or give away the principle of Sunday labour.

MR. GULL: I was thinking of your reference to the men working year after year without a Sunday off. The hardship would not be so great if they could get any other day of the week to themselves.

MR. COLLIER: The strain would not be so great; but I maintain that we have not arrived at the stage of civilisation when a man should not have his Sunday to himself. Imagine coming off a day-shift at four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, going home, having a wash and supper, and going on again at twelve o'clock on Saturday night. It is absolutely unnatural. I undertake to say that if the members of this House went to the fields and did this work for one week, there would not be one of them who would vote in favour of Sunday labour. I appeal to members to consider those thousands of men who have to endure this servitude month after month and year after year. It is unnatural, and I may say inhuman. It has been contended that the men themselves do not object to Sunday labour. That is not a fact; because early this year the Kalgoorlie Miners' Union took a ballot of all their members, and the vote in favour of abolishing Sunday labour was almost unanimous. Those are the men practically interested. I agree with the Minister's contention that to some extent, at the beginning, the abolition of Sunday labour would perhaps result in some of the men being thrown out of work; but that would be for a short time only, perhaps six or twelve months. It is all a matter of spending a little more money to increase the plant on the surface, so that the mines can treat just as much in six days as they now treat in seven. The objection I have to the Bill is that too much is left to regulations. It provides that "the Governor may make regulations;" but we have no guarantee that the Governor will make regulations. And we are entitled to know what are the regulations. The Governor may make regulations as to sanitation. Those regulations have not been made up to date; and for my part I am sceptical as to whether they will be made in future, so long as they are left

to the Governor. The Royal Commission on the Ventilation and Sanitation of Mines thoroughly investigated this matter, and this is what they report as to the sanitary condition of the mines on the Eastern Goldfields:—

Of 24 mines inspected in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder district, all had change-rooms. Of these, only 12 had heating and drying apparatus; two had nothing for the men to wash in, five had kerosene tins, and one had buckets for the purpose; only eight had baths, five having shower baths, one a plunge bath, and one a plunge and shower bath; only five provided tubs for clothes, etc.; only three had any rules posted up; the floor space varied from about seven to 150 square feet of floor per man, and the cubic air space from about 60 to 1,800 cubic feet per man employed underground; eight were found to be dirty and 16 clean. The proportion of the wash basins (including such make-shift arrangements as kerosene tins) to the total number of men employed underground varied from one for two men to one for 41 men. The proportion of baths in the eight mines so provided varied from one for 12 men to one for 390 men employed underground. There should be a definite standard established.

That is what I say. There should be a definite standard established, and it should be embodied in the Act, or we should know beforehand what is the intention regarding sanitation. At present we do not know, when the whole matter is left to regulations. That is not sufficient. The Royal Commission state farther that on the Eastern Goldfields they inspected 45 mines, and with regard to sanitary conditions found that 11 were "very filthy," seven "dirty"—a total of 18 either very filthy or dirty; while 17 are described as "clean" and seven as "fair." So it will be seen that the Royal Commission described more as being very dirty than as being clean. I know from experience several change-houses on mines. In some there is a miserable little hovel about four feet high under the engine-house, which is built on blocks. The men have to crawl underneath the engine-house, and change their clothes while in a stooping position, with the taps leaking and water lying about two inches deep on the ground. That condition exists in many of the mines at this day; and I trust that the regulations will be so framed as to secure proper and decent change-houses for the men employed underground. The member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan) has expressed

his intention to move for the abolition of the contract system. I sincerely hope that this amendment will be carried. At present, hundreds of men on our Eastern Goldfields are not earning more than 6s., 7s., or 8s. a day. The system to-day is not a contract system at all. If it were there might not be so strong an objection to it. A man is working underground and earning fair wages to-day. The manager comes along and says, "You will be on contract to-morrow, at £2 10s. per foot." The man has no option; he cannot object; he cannot say the price is too low. I myself was working in a rise, and the manager appeared and said, "You are on contract at £2 10s. per foot to-morrow." I replied, "You know very well that is not sufficient. This is one of the hardest parts of the mine." He said, "There are a hundred men on top of the shaft very glad to take the work if you do not like it." That is the condition to-day on our goldfields. If a man has a contract at which he can earn decent wages, making 17s. or 18s. per shift for one fortnight, he is told that for the next fortnight the price will be reduced; and it is reduced continually until he can perhaps earn only the minimum wage, 10s. or 12s. a day, by doing nearly double work. Such a system is pernicious in the extreme. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) stated the other night, when lauding the managers, that they were to be commended for reducing their costs; and they are, so long as they can reduce costs by the introduction of labour-saving machinery and up-to-date methods of treatment. But no manager, and nobody else, is to be commended for reducing costs by sacrificing the health and the lives of the men engaged in the industry. This Bill is essentially a measure for the Committee stage; and I intend to watch every line of it as it goes through Committee. I do not intend to say more at this juncture; but I ask in all earnestness for the assistance of Government supporters who perhaps have not that knowledge of mining possessed by members in Opposition. In this House all members are specialists of some sort. Some of us have special knowledge of mining, others a special knowledge of agriculture. Consequently, when certain Government supporters speak on agriculture, we in

Opposition are considerably influenced by their remarks; and I hope that members opposite will not vote on party lines, will not blindly follow the Minister in every detail of the Bill. It has been said that the Bill is to be treated on non-party lines. The result of the divisions in Committee will show whether this is true; because it must be conceded that the Opposition have a more thorough knowledge of the details of the Bill than can possibly be possessed by Government supporters. I hope that in Committee members opposite will give us their best assistance to make this a thorough and comprehensive measure.

On motion by MR. GULL, debate adjourned.

MOTION—COLLIE COAL INDUSTRY, TO ADOPT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Debate resumed from the 26th July on the motion by Mr. Ewing, "That the recommendations contained in Dr. Jack's report upon the Collie Coal Industry should be given effect to by the Government."

MR. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): I desire to draw the particular attention of the House to the attitude assumed by the Labour Government in which I formerly held a portfolio, and to try to justify to-night the action which we then took; because I believe that our action embodied the only possible solution of the difficulty that is continually occupying the attention of members year in and year out. The Labour Government did endeavour to overcome the difficulty; and I desire to-night to outline the course which we endeavoured to take, and to try to convince Parliament that the adoption of this course is the only means by which the difficulty can be overcome. We must realise that this industry has received considerable assistance from the State. But the assistance given to the industry in the past has only encouraged those who have been operating in the industry to come to the Government and ask for more. And that in itself would not be so bad were it not for the fact that other companies, encouraged by the assistance obtained by the companies then operating on the Collie coalfield, were formed; and as the member for Collie said the

other night, because they were led to believe they were going to get a share of this assistance that the other companies were receiving from the Government. You have only to refer to that portion of Dr. Jack's report wherein he states:—

The withdrawal of the railway order would therefore involve the immediate closing down of the mines, unless the outside consumption had in the meantime assumed much larger proportions. It must not be forgotten that a considerable amount of capital has been sunk on the faith of the Government's policy being adhered to.

That clearly points out that the member for Collie was justified in stating that a large number of the companies had been encouraged to come to the Collie coalfield not because they thought there was a fair market for the coal, but because they thought they would get a share of the assistance given to the other companies by the Government. I am not here to-night to say that we have given direct assistance to the companies by bonus from the Treasury; but the industry has been assisted in an indirect manner by the Government in paying more for coal for the use of the Railway Department than the product was really worth. We have got to realise that in the face of what we have done in assisting that industry; and while we supported in its early history the opening up of the Collie coalfield, and encouraged and assisted its development, that very assistance has encouraged other companies to come in. The point I wish to make is that members should realise that we can go on and go on giving assistance until there are so many companies operating in this coalfield as to be absolutely a burden to the State such as we will be unable to carry. Feeling there was this danger in the future—and at the present time I am convinced that there are too many companies operating on that field—feeling also that the only solution of the difficulty facing us then and facing us to-day was to reduce the number of companies operating on that field, and as a consequence to reduce the number of companies we had to assist from the public funds, in trying to arrive at some solution of this great difficulty the Labour Government appointed Dr. Jack a Commissioner to go into the whole question. I have a great respect for Dr. Jack, and I

believe that his report, generally speaking, is a fairly sound one; but for the member for Collie to come to Parliament and ask us to adopt that report, to put the recommendations into operation to-day, I do not think it is justified. The recommendations in the report are premature, and I do not think the time has yet arrived when we should give that assistance to the industry which the hon. member would have us give, and which he says was recommended by Dr. Jack. It has to be borne in mind, and Dr. Jack makes a point of it, that the fact that we have coal in the State is a matter for congratulation. We can hardly realise the importance of it as an asset. But that asset becomes valuable only when the firewood supply is absolutely exhausted. To-day it must be realised that we have a plentiful supply of firewood for the mines, and we have practically no consumption of Collie coal for private purposes.

MR. EWING: There is a large consumption.

MR. JOHNSON: The principal fuel is firewood, and the consumption of Collie coal is very small in proportion to the population.

MR. EWING: It is not.

MR. JOHNSON: It is only small. The hon. member will not argue that we are consuming Collie coal to any great extent in our private houses. This demonstrates that the time has not yet arrived for the adoption of Collie coal as a fuel. Although Dr. Jack's report is a valuable one, it would be premature to put it into operation, because, as I have said, the time has not yet arrived when we can hope to obtain the adoption of Collie coal as a fuel for all purposes. When that time does arrive, the report will be of great value; but at the present time it is not valuable. It has been said, especially by members on the Treasury benches and throughout the State during the last general election, that the action taken by me as Minister for Railways in the Labour Government tended to create a monopoly, that we were creating a monopoly which would place one company in the position of charging an amount much over and above what the value of the coal would be to the State. It must be borne in mind, however, that the price of Collie coal is not regu-

lated by the number of companies working in Collie, but is regulated by the price of Newcastle coal. The competition is not between the different companies at Collie, but between Newcastle coal and Collie coal. Therefore when we realised that, it cannot be successfully argued that when we endeavoured to cut out one or two of the companies working at Collie, to cut away the Government contract from them, which of course meant that those companies would close down, we were creating a monopoly for the one company that was going to get the contract. Because that company would always have to keep its price down, for the reason that their real competitor was Newcastle—they were not afraid in any shape or form of the other companies working in Collie.

MR. EWING? What about the capital which had been invested in those companies?

MR. JOHNSON: It will be seen from the hon. member's interjection how dangerous a question this one is. The member for Collie interjects, "What about the capital put into these mines?" Have we to take responsibility for the capital that has been put into the Collie coal industry? Have we to carry that burden because of our having assisted in the opening and development of one mine? It was because of our having helped one company that other companies were floated in the old country or elsewhere; so because the companies have been encouraged to come here the hon. member suggests we have to take this responsibility. When the Labour Government called tenders for the supply of coal, I made one mistake—I neglected to read the terms of the contract which was prepared by the Commissioner of Railways. My idea was not to give the whole of the contract to one company, but to divide it up between two companies. But the terms of the tenders calling for the supply of 90,000 tons of coal for the use of the Railway Department were drawn in such a way that the companies had consequently to tender for the supply of the full quantity. When the tenders had been received, the Commissioner recommended that the lowest be accepted; and when the calorific value of the coal was taken into account, it turned out that the tender of the Collie Proprietary Company

was the lowest. I did not agree to that recommendation immediately, but sent back a minute saying the two lowest tenderers should receive a contract for 45,000 tons each, providing that the higher of the two would agree to reduce its price. The two lowest tenderers were the Collie Proprietary Company and the Co-operative Company. I was convinced at the time that the solution of the difficulty lay in the closing down of some of those companies which were looking only to the Government to keep them going; consequently I took the step I did. But when my minute went back to the Commissioner of Railways, it was pointed out to me that we could not divide the contract as I had suggested, as tenders had been called for 90,000 tons of coal, and that the prices quoted were to supply that full quantity; whereas if we divided it, the tenderers would not be prepared to quote the same rates for half the quantity. I then decided to recommend to Cabinet that the whole of the contract be given to the Collie Proprietary Company. But there was another difficulty facing us in this matter. Just prior to our giving the contract to the Collie Proprietary Company, there had been a difficulty between the company and its employees, and if that difficulty continued it would probably stop the delivery of the coal under contract. Shortly before the calling of tenders, there had been a dispute heard by the Arbitration Court, the award in which had not been acceptable to the men. Eventually, however, the men and the company came together and an industrial agreement was drawn up. This would expire a month or so after the calling for tenders by the Government for the supply of coal—I believe the tenders were called in August and the agreement was to expire in October following. I knew that owing to the low price tendered, so soon as the agreement expired the company would immediately reduce the men's wages to the amount fixed by the Arbitration Court award, and when that was done we would have difficulties between the men and their employers. There was another point which largely influenced me in the matter. The president of the Arbitration Court, referring to the price at which the companies supplied Collie coal at the time, said that even at the present selling price of 11s.

per ton, the amount received for the coal would barely pay working expenses. From the evidence given before the Arbitration Court the president had arrived at that conclusion: yet when shortly after that evidence had been given before the Court we called for tenders for the supply of Collie coal, we received tenders at 8s. 6d. and 8s. 9d. per ton. I found after reading it that if there was such a large reduction made in the price, there was no other means of making ends meet except by reducing the wages paid to the men. Of course I realised that there would be some difference owing to the fact that one company was going to supply the whole 90,000 tons and not one-fourth of that quantity as previously; but even with that increased output they could not do it at the reduced rate unless they reduced the wages paid to the men.

MR. EWING: What about the machines.

MR. JOHNSON: I think it had been decided to instal machines before the case went to the Arbitration Court. I think the fact that they were to be introduced was brought before the Court, and I think that the president knew it was intended to introduce machines in order to reduce the cost of output. In face of that he said that the evidence convinced him that at 11s. the companies could only pay working expenses. The president went on still farther to say:—

If we gave too high a rate of wage we might close the industry entirely, and throw a great number of men out of employment. By doing what we have done by this award [that was considerably reducing the wages] we may maintain the life of the industry, and leave it to those workers who care to do so to work under the conditions which the industry can stand.

In other words the president said, "We have given an award regulating the wages to be paid, but if the men do not like it they can leave the industry altogether and practically go out on strike." The men taking these remarks to mind, immediately after the award was delivered decided that they would not accept the wages, and that they would do what the president of the court told them they might do, that is leave the work alone; and when the men were going to walk out the companies were compelled to give them an industrial agreement which would have expired a month after the tenders were called. In

order to avoid any friction that would cause the supply of Collie coal to be considerably reduced or practically stopped altogether, Cabinet recommended that we should accept the tender of the Collie Proprietary Co. for the supply of the whole quantity, provided that they entered into an industrial agreement with the men and paid a rate of wages to be agreed upon by both sides during the term of the contract, and that they should get the contract for three years if they did so. I believe that immediately we forwarded this to the Collie Proprietary Co. they convened a meeting of their employees and endeavoured to draw up an industrial agreement; but just when we were in the midst of that a change of Government came about, the Labour Government resigned, and a new Government came in, and negotiations were broken off. It was then decided that an endeavour should be made to get the new Government to alter the conditions. Those conditions were not altered, and the coal industry was allowed to drift as it had drifted previously. The 90,000 tons were distributed amongst four companies, and we are back to-day exactly where we were a considerable time before Dr. Jack, as Commissioner, inquired into this industry. I desire to briefly emphasise the fact that I am convinced we cannot go on as we are going on now. I was rather disappointed in the utterances of the Minister for Railways when he used the old cry, "We intend to give the industry every encouragement." He did not go into details to explain exactly how the Government intend to encourage the industry.

MR. EWING: We do not want any encouragement if the House adopts Dr. Jack's report.

MR. JOHNSON: I do not wish to encourage the House to adopt that report. I would have liked the Minister to state something definite, or to outline the policy the Government intend to pursue in connection with this industry. If the motion be carried it will place a greater burden than we are justified in placing on the shoulders of the people of the State. The Minister simply states that the Government are prepared to encourage the industry, provided that Parliament will give them an instruction in the

terms of this motion. We must realise that the absolute life of the industry depends entirely on Government orders. If these orders are to be distributed among four companies, each company having such a small quantity to supply will become absolutely dissatisfied.

MR. EWING: They are quite satisfied to-day.

MR. JOHNSON: I understand that the price to-day is something like 8s. 6d. or 8s. 9d. per ton. If they are satisfied with that—

MR. EWING: It was not talking of the price.

MR. JOHNSON: There you are! They are not satisfied. I was going to say that I would sit down and say no more if the member for Collie would assure me that the present condition of affairs is satisfactory to the companies. The four companies are supplying between them 90,000 tons—[MR. HOLMAN: About 115,000 tons]—and receiving about 8s. 6d. or 8s. 9d. per ton. If they are satisfied, I am of course prepared to let them continue; but the member for Collie leads us to understand by the terms of his motion and by his remarks that they are not satisfied, and that he wants something more. I do not agree to give him something more, and I shall state my reasons. The Minister for Railways has complained that by giving the whole of the supply to one company we were creating a monopoly, and would have no competition, and he said that he desired to keep the four companies going to maintain the competition; but if we follow closely the remarks of the member for Collie, we shall see that the hon. member does not want competition at all. He says, "Take Dr. Jack's report." Well, Dr. Jack states the value of the coal is so much—the Proprietary coal so much, the Co-operative coal so much, and so on for the four mines. The member for Collie asks us to accept Dr. Jack's value and thus have no competition at all. Even to-day if we were to accept this motion, we would still be in the position that the Minister for Railways claims we would be in if we gave the whole of the supply to one company. If we have one company we have to trust to Newcastle coal to give the competition; but if we have four companies, by the terms of this motion we shall still have to go to the

Newcastle coal for the competition which is necessary, according to the Minister's contention, to keep the price at a reasonable rate. So there is a difference of opinion there, and I emphasise this point to make members realise that it is an important matter whether we are to have four companies operating on the fields or one. Also, I desire to disabuse the minds of members on the point raised by the Minister for Railways that if we give the supply to one company we shall have a monopoly; because if we gave it to four companies we would have every bit just as much a monopoly. Before leaving the matter of this contract I would like to refer to the statement made by the member for Collie that the Commissioner of Railways, in recommending the acceptance of this price from the one company, was endeavouring to annihilate the industry. That remark is absolutely unfair. I do not think the Commissioner of Railways desired to annihilate the industry at all.

MR. EWING: You do not think so?

MR. JOHNSON: I do not. I maintain that the Commissioner of Railways was justified in protesting against the railway revenue being used as practically a bonus to the coal-mining industry. He was justified in protesting against this state of affairs continuing, and he justly claims—and later on I am going to claim—that if we are going to encourage this industry, if we are going to give the coal-mining companies a bonus to keep the industry going, we should not do it in an indirect way from the railway revenue, but we should give it by a direct vote from the Treasury, so that members of the House and the people of the State would know exactly what it is costing this country per annum to keep the coal-mining industry going. Let us get to the real position. The member for Collie asks us to adopt Dr. Jack's recommendations, and he says that the crux of the question is that we should on the railways carry one and one-third tons of Collie coal at the same rate as one ton of Newcastle coal; and to emphasise the fairness of this, he says that it takes one and one-third tons of Collie coal to equal one ton of Newcastle coal.

MR. EWING: Dr. Jack says that.

MR. JOHNSON: Of course the hon. member agrees with Dr. Jack. Then the

hon. member states that because it takes one and one-third tons of Collie coal to equal a ton of Newcastle coal, we should carry one and one-third tons of Collie coal on our railways at the same rate as one ton of Newcastle coal; in other words, that we should give a bonus to the industry by way of our railway rates. I cannot agree with the hon. member's proposal. I am prepared to agree that it is an industry deserving encouragement from the State, but it does not deserve the encouragement the hon. member desires us to give. I say that encouragement should be given by means of a direct vote from the Treasury, and not by means of reducing the railway rates, because nobody, except perhaps the Auditor General, knows exactly what it is costing the country in connection with the subsidy given to Collie coal. If we give the subsidy from the Treasury we know exactly what it is costing the country, and we have the direct proposition to put to the people:— "Are you prepared to give this bonus to keep the Collie coal industry going?" The people would have the direct question put to them, and we would have the people taking a greater interest in the matter than they take at present.

MR. EWING: You do it on ores and concentrates.

MR. JOHNSON: Of course it is done in connection with the different values of ores, but will the hon. member agree that because Collie coal is not of the best value more Collie coal should be carried than Newcastle coal? Will the hon. member agree that because sheaoak is of less value than salmon-gum we should carry sheaoak firewood at a cheaper rate than salmon-gum? It is exactly the same argument. We cannot get the same result from one class of firewood as from the other, and if we give a special concession to Collie coal, we must give the same concession to sheaoak firewood. It is an extreme comparison to take, I admit, but if we say that because we carry ores at different rates we should carry Collie coal at a less rate than Newcastle coal, it is the same line of argument.

At 6:30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. JOHNSON (continuing): I think that when we adjourned I was dealing

with the proposal which the member for Collie (Mr. Ewing) stated was the crux of the whole question, namely that one and one-third tons of Collie coal should be carried at the same rate as a ton of Newcastle coal. I was endeavouring to show that we should not be justified at the present time in adopting that recommendation of Dr. Jack's, which has been endorsed by the hon. member. The hon. member interjected just before the tea adjournment that we carried different values of gold-bearing ore at different rates, and he tried to urge that because we did this with gold-bearing ore we should do it with Collie coal. But if we drew comparisons in that way the hon. member would have to ask that the coal produced by the Cardiff Company should be carried at a less rate than the coal produced by the Collie Proprietary Company.

MR. EWING: Not at all.

MR. JOHNSON: If we carried it to its logical conclusion, that is exactly what the hon. member would urge. The hon. member stated in his speech that we carry, for instance, two-ounce ore at a lower rate than we carry four-ounce ore. If we carried this argument out and applied it to Collie coal, the hon. member should contend that because Collie Proprietary is better than Collie Cardiff coal, the Cardiff coal should be carried at a lower rate than the Collie Proprietary coal.

MR. EWING: No.

MR. JOHNSON: He does not argue that, but I say that it is a natural comparison that could be drawn between the two rates. I maintain that what the hon. member wants is a subsidy granted to this industry, not by a direct vote from the Treasury, but by reduced railway rates, and I am utterly opposed to the proposition. There is another side of the question to which I desire to draw members' attention. I wish to ask the House whether we are justified in subsidising one industry when it is competing with another industry. For instance, we are asked to subsidise Collie coal and give cheaper rates in order that they can carry Collie coal to the goldfields. By doing that we should, at the same time, be cutting out the firewood industry, which is carried on on a very extensive scale on our goldfields. The

proposal has been made several times, and I think it has appeared in the public Press, that a special rate should be given to the Collie coal in order that they could run Collie coal to Day Dawn, and thus cut out the present supply of Newcastle coal going to those mines. The hon. member has urged that because the Midland Railway Company will carry it at something like three-eighths of a penny per ton per mile the Government railways should carry it at the same rate, and that if this were done these mines would use Collie coal in preference to Newcastle coal. I do not think we are justified in giving the special rate which I understand is given, even to take Newcastle coal to our Murchison goldfields.

MR. HOLMAN: There is no special rate.

MR. JOHNSON: If there were, I would be opposed to it; and likewise I am opposed to any proposition to give a special rate to Collie coal to take it there, when we know perfectly well that if the Government gave a special rate to carry firewood on that line we could obtain sufficient firewood from the Black Range and Mount Magnet districts to supply those gold mines for some considerable time. It must be borne in mind that when we assist the firewood industry we assist a larger number of workers than we do when we assist the Collie coal. Where there are ten men employed in cutting timber, Collie coal employs only one.

MR. EWING: Collie coal does not go up there.

MR. JOHNSON: The hon. member desires that it should go there.

MR. EWING: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: If you take Collie coal there you are not doing any good to the State, although the State is subsidising you, but rather you are doing an injury. For instance, take the Eastern Goldfields. The hon. member wishes to get the coal to Kalgoorlie, and wants the lowest possible rate. He desires to get a subsidy from the Government by getting cheap rates in order that they may land this coal on the goldfields, and in order to cut out the firewood.

MR. EWING: Quite wrong.

MR. JOHNSON: There is no doubt that will be the ultimate end of this, and it is necessary to realise what the ultimate end will be. I want to warn mem-

bers about this. Supposing we leave the Eastern Goldfields out of the question, the hon. member wants to take Collie coal to Day Dawn. He suggests that we should subsidise Collie coal in order to cut out the supply of Newcastle coal. The hon. member forgets to point out that if we gave special rates for the supply of firewood we could supply firewood to these gold mines, and if we gave special consideration to the firewood industry on the Murchison Goldfields we should employ more men at better rates of wages and with better results to the State than we would do if we gave a subsidy to Collie coal. There is no possible argument against that. We know that wood does exist there, and it is only the high rate of freight which prevents firewood from competing against Newcastle coal. If we reduced slightly the freight on firewood, we could produce sufficient firewood to keep those mines on the Murchison goldfields going. But supposing we gave in to the hon. member and the Government decided to reduce these rates; we should then have an agitation coming along to reduce the rate to the Eastern Goldfields. I want to emphasise this. We have a large industry on the goldfields, an industry of infinitely more value than the Collie coal. I admit that eventually Collie coal will be of greater value, but at the present time our firewood industry in this State is of far greater value than the Collie coal industry. We have, I say, ten men employed in our firewood industry where only one is employed in our coal industry. A fair proportion of the cost of producing Collie coal is charged up against expenses in the old country. Some of these mines have been floated there, and consequently there are certain London expenses. But if you come down to the firewood industry, the whole of the money paid or put into that industry is put in inside the State, and the wages and profits in connection with the industry are spent in the State. Consequently the firewood industry to-day is of far greater value to this State than the coal-mining industry. Just in conclusion I want to say that I view with a great deal of alarm the system that has arisen in this State of the employees in a given industry combining with the employers to try to bleed the country for some special considera-

tion for their given industry. On every occasion when this Collie coal question arises we have the men combining with the employers to get special rates from the Government; and members will find that the arbitration award states that if the price of Collie coal advances a shilling the men will get so much of that advance; consequently it is to the interests of the men to combine with the companies to try and force the Government to give an increased price for the coal. Not only do we find this just now, but it has been going on for some considerable time in our coal-mining industry. We have in connection with the timber industry exactly the same thing going on. What I want to ask is, where is this thing going to end? We shall directly have the gold-mining workers combining with the gold-mining companies and asking for special consideration in order that they may enhance their profits. We hear about a stable Government, a strong Government, and a large majority; but have we a Government to-day that will face these difficulties? These are difficulties that require the hand of a strong Minister to put them down, and I have no hesitation in saying that I for one view with a great deal of alarm this system of combination of employers and employees to try and get better consideration from the Government in order to enhance the profit of the employers where the employees only get a very small proportion. I am not going to do as the Minister did, speak round the question and say we desire to assist the industry and put it on a sound basis. I say I am dissatisfied with the present method the Government have adopted in connection with this industry, and I would strongly recommend the House to try on this occasion to lay down some definite principle, a policy that will carry us on for a good time, so that we can all say we have a settled policy in connection with the Collie coal industry for a given period. Then we can turn to some other industry and put that on a settled basis. I do not agree with this patchwork system, these continued motions coming along, when a Minister says, "Yes, I agree we want to encourage the industry; we want to do something to get the industry going;" but he does not tell us what that something is. He gives an indefinite

reply. Then in a while we get another motion urging "We have not had the consideration the Minister promised." As a matter of fact he never promised anything. We have another motion coming on, and year after year we have no settled policy propounded in connection with these industries. I would strongly urge on the Government that to reduce the railway rates on Collie coal would be absolutely unfair to the firewood industry which exists to a very large extent in Western Australia. I emphasise the point that the firewood industry is of far greater value to-day than is the Collie coal industry; consequently it is unfair for us to subsidise the industry of lesser value in order to compete against an industry of greater value. I am utterly opposed, therefore, to any reduction in our railway rates. What I would recommend is that the Railway Department be requested to estimate the quantity of coal they will want per year for, say, three or four years, and that the Railway Department be requested to estimate the value of Collie as compared with Newcastle coal.

MR. EWING: That has already been done, in Dr. Jack's report.

MR. JOHNSON: I do not wish to rely on that report. The value of Newcastle coal fluctuates.

MR. EWING: The report gives a fair basis.

MR. JOHNSON: If it gives a fair basis, we will take the report for it. Get the Railway Department to estimate the value of Collie coal as compared with Newcastle, or if the report be fair, take the basis provided in the report. Then I should call for tenders for the supply of the estimated quantity required. I should call for tenders for the whole quantity, or half, preferably half, so that we might divide the contract between two companies. Let us have two companies operating on the coalfield instead of four, as we have to-day. Then I should ascertain the actual value to the Railway Department, and the actual cost as per the tenders, and recoup the difference by a direct vote from the Treasury. Then the Government and the people would know that we are paying so much per annum as a direct subsidy to encourage this industry. I venture to assert that we should do something of that sort, in order

finally to settle the question. Every year I have been in the House I have heard some discussion on this subject, and every year the problem has been set aside by the expression of a general desire on the part of members to encourage the industry. But we never get any further; we never outline any definite policy. I do not wish to dictate to the Government; but I do wish to state that those are my opinions, and that some such plan should be adopted to settle this vexed question once and for all.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison): I rise to make a few remarks on this motion, not with any intention of harming the industry, for every one of us should do all he can to foster every industry in the State. But we have to face the fact that Collie coal is, as we all regret, much inferior in value to Newcastle coal. We have to consider what assistance the Collie industry has received. I should be glad to know how much the Government have paid in support of the industry; and I think that if there was any possible means of obtaining the information, the total would startle not only this House but the whole of the people in the country. I dare say I am within the limit if I state that hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent in the effort to foster the industry; and we are now spending between £5,000 and £6,000 per annum over and above the actual price paid to tenderers for the supply of Collie coal.

MR. MONGER: What is Victoria paying?

MR. HOLMAN: I have not seen the report of the Victorian Royal Commission; but I know that the commission was appointed to abolish sweating in the Victorian coal mines. It is useless to say that our Commissioner of Railways is to blame for the stand he has taken in this matter. I say, and I defy contradiction, that the Commissioner never, while I was Minister for Railways, did anything detrimental to the interests of Collie coal. He desired to protect his position as a trustee for the people, and not to compel the railways to pay an exorbitant price for Collie coal when they could get better coal at a more reasonable price from other places. The Commissioner, backed up by the opinions of

his expert officers, stated the value of Collie coal. But we do not need to go to the Commissioner or his officers to ascertain its value. We need refer only to evidence given by railway experts in the recent libel case heard in the Supreme Court in Perth during the last fortnight. If members will read the remarks of witnesses who use Collie coal every day, it will be seen that the State is seriously retarding its development by the use of Collie coal on the railways. In order to encourage an industry that will give employment I am prepared at any time to make some sacrifice; but I say we should have a limit, and know to what extent we are fostering the industry. From the remarks of the member for Collie (Mr. Ewing), when moving the motion, it was hard to ascertain exactly what he wanted. He said he wanted the House to adopt Dr. Jack's report; and he picked out a portion of the report suited to his arguments. I have more than once carefully read through the report; and I dare say I could pick out portions that are not quite so favourable as the portions chosen by the member for Collie.

MR. EWING: I do not wish to eliminate those. I wish to adopt the whole of the report.

MR. HOLMAN: Then I should like, if you are so anxious for that, to adopt Dr. Jack's second recommendation—

That every facility be afforded to the companies for the amalgamation of their holdings, or for combining their holdings under fewer ownerships, as one or two mines could easily produce the whole of the present output, and costs of management and the unnecessary upkeep of a number of plants must be reduced.

If the hon. member is so anxious to adopt the Commissioner's report, he should have taken some definite step to bring about the amalgamation of those properties, so that only one coal mine will be called upon to supply the requirements of the Government. On one occasion this session the hon. member said that I had no knowledge of the facts, because, since I as Minister for Railways dealt with the coal question, coal-hewing machines had been introduced at Collie. Now I wish to say that those machines were worked at Collie before I was Minister for Railways; and the hon. member should know that when he waited on me

with a deputation desiring the Railway Department to take a certain quantity of their coal, I informed him that as soon as the machines got into proper working order the coal could be produced for 2s. a ton less than the cost at that time. And I had some little knowledge of what I was talking about, for the reduction was considerably greater than 2s. I made a statement in this House about the employment of aliens on the mines at Collie. I said I would refuse to record a vote for granting assistance to the employment of aliens on the Collie coalfield, when there were people of our own flesh and blood there who could not secure work. My authority was the secretary of the coal miners' association, who should know what he is talking about. Mr. Wilson's words were:—

During the past six months a large number of competent and reliable English and Australian miners at Collie had been unable to obtain employment, despite which many aliens had secured work immediately on arrival in the district. In one mine alone—the Collie Cardiff—in the period between April 15 and June 1, the proportion of those "put on" had been two foreigners to one Englishman or Australian. It was felt by the union that this was grossly unfair to the Britishers settled in the district.

MR. EWING: How many aliens are there altogether?

MR. HOLMAN: I do not know; but I think that the proportion is about 15 per cent., according to the information I have gathered from the Press.

MR. EWING: It is 6 per cent.

MR. HOLMAN: The facts, including the dates, are stated in this report. At one time the proportion was two to one of aliens put on in preference to Britishers. If that be so, we are going outside our province in continuing to grant assistance for the employment of aliens at Collie in preference to Australians with families, who have been settled in the district for years. The first thing we should do when asked to assist the coal industry is to assist those who are helping to build up the State, and not grant assistance to give preferential employment to aliens. I maintain that we should give some little assistance to the coal mines at Collie, for the industry is in the State, and is without doubt a splendid industry, which should be fostered to whatever extent we can afford. But I maintain

that any assistance granted by the State should be given directly to the miners, to the people employed in the industry. We have about 300 men employed there now, and we should grant assistance to them, if to anyone. They are getting a livelihood, and contributing to the upkeep of the State. One thing I do not like in connection with the present assistance to the Collie mining companies is the refund of the royalties. We know that the companies have to pay certain royalties to the State, which royalties are being refunded. Those refunds do not count in the selling price of the coal; hence the workers at Collie do not in any way participate in the refunds. To show exactly what we are paying for coal, I should prefer to have an extra 3d. or 6d. a ton given to the companies, instead of refunding the royalties. That would show clearly what assistance we are giving to the industry. It has been said in this debate that the cost of Newcastle coal has been reduced by the competition of the Collie product. With that statement I join issue. I do not think that the Collie coal has had any great effect on the price of the Newcastle. To-day we are being supplied with Newcastle coal at 15s. 4d. a ton, delivered at our ports; and we note that South Australia, only a few months ago, made a contract with a New South Wales firm to deliver coal in South Australia at the present time at about 2s. a ton less than the price now charged for delivery at West Australian ports. In South Australia, Newcastle coal has not to face any great competition with a local product; and my statement is borne out to some extent by Dr. Jack, in Clause 102, Table B. of his report, which shows the prices for Collie and for Newcastle coal ruling in Western Australia since the date on which Collie coal was first delivered. From this it will be seen that when the price of Collie coal was at its lowest, the price of Newcastle coal was at its highest, showing that the competition of Collie coal has no great bearing on the price of Newcastle, which will always depend on the position of affairs in New South Wales. The time when we paid our highest price for Collie, when the first Collie coal was sold, was in 1898; and the Newcastle coal was then supplied at 17s. 11d. Three or four

years afterwards, when the supply of Collie coal had increased, in December, 1901, the price of Newcastle coal was 27s. 10d. and of Collie coal 9s. 7d. On the 1st April, 1904, Newcastle coal was at 15s. 4d. and Collie coal 11s.; so as the price of Collie coal went up, that of Newcastle was reduced. If we were now to call tenders for Newcastle coal, we should get it at a considerably lower price than we are paying. Nearly the whole of the coal produced at Collie is consumed by the Government of this State. The output is 140,000 tons per year.

MR. TROY: Do the Midland Railway Company use it?

MR. HOLMAN: No.

MR. MONGER: Yes.

MR. HOLMAN: Only recently, if they do. They did not when I was Minister for Railways. The State uses about 115,000 tons per annum of Collie coal, leaving about 25,000 tons to be consumed by private persons. The Collie mines have had an ample opportunity to work up a more extensive trade; and the fact that they have not proves beyond doubt that the time has come now when we should compel those companies to look to some other source of upkeep than the State alone. I should like to see the companies make some effort to show people that this coal is a useful article and one that can be used for all purposes. Let them, by erecting special stoves suited to it, demonstrate that the coal is a useful article and a better fuel than wood. They would then be able to obtain a local trade, and would not need to rely on the Government for the necessary assistance to keep the industry going. The railage charge for Collie coal is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile, whereas Newcastle coal is carried at I think M rates—1d. a ton per mile, and for long distances of over 100 miles $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a ton per mile. It has been said we should reduce the railage on Collie coal. But that will not make any difference in the coal for railway use, seeing that we have to rail it to certain parts of the railway; and on the other hand if we were to charge 1d. per ton it would not make any difference on this coal, because it is being used on the railways. The coal has to be railed from Collie to Perth, and no payment is received from that source.

MR. EWING: But the estimated cost of railage is charged against the coal.

MR. HOLMAN: Yes; and the estimate is placed at the lowest possible figure. I am in the position of knowing that in the past we have been carrying Collie coal at an estimated cost which just about pays working expenses and interest. Therefore if we reduce the rate for the carriage of this coal on our railways, we will be carrying it at a loss, and I do not think we should do that at the present stage, when we have so many calls on the funds of the State. As the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) said, I would prefer to see a straight-out grant given to the industry, so that we may know exactly how far we are assisting it. It has been said that Collie coal could be used on the Murchison. If we were to charge the same baulage rate for firewood to supply the mines on the Murchison as is at present charged between Collie and Perth for the carriage of Collie coal, namely $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile, the mining companies would be quite satisfied with that concession, for they could obtain plenty of wood for use as fuel. In the first place we will consider whether this coal can be carried to the Murchison. We all know—and even those interested in the industry, even the member for Collie himself admits it—that the longer this coal is exposed to the air the more it is lessened in value; in other words, it deteriorates on exposure to the air. It would be impossible to rail Collie coal to the Murchison under four days, and the longest period stated by experts during which this coal may be subjected to exposure in order that its utility as a fuel may not be impaired is two days. That contention cannot be disputed; it may be read in Dr. Jack's report. Now the cost of Collie coal at Collie would be 10s. per ton; then it has to be railed 700 miles to the Murchison, and at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile the railage would amount to 27s. 6d. per ton; or a total cost of 37s. 6d. per ton at the Murchison. If the baulage rate were reduced as is suggested to $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per ton per mile, that cost would be reduced by 3s. 8d.—in round numbers the cost would be 33s. 6d. At the present time wood is supplied to the mines on the Murchison at 19s. a ton. One and a-half tons of wood, on the authority of Dr. Jack's

report, equals one ton of Collie coal; hence the cost of an equivalent quantity of firewood at Day Dawn, which I quote because that is where most of the fuel for mines is required, would be 28s. 6d. against 37s. 6d. a ton of Collie coal under lowest payable rate, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton. This proves that the use of Collie coal as a fuel on the Murchison is not very feasible at the present time. Then again, were we to reduce the haulage to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the purpose of fostering the use of Collie coal on the Murchison, seeing that it would take four days for the coal to be transported there, it would mean an increased cost to the State by reason of the scarcity of trucks. The Railway Department would require to be supplied with a largely increased number of trucks, for there might be two or three train-loads of coal going to the Murchison daily, and the empty trucks returning would not be available for ordinary traffic. So the cost would be very great, and it would be preferable to reduce the charge for the haulage of firewood to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton per mile. It has been said that if we reduce the rate for the carriage of Collie coal over our lines, the Midland Railway Company will be prepared to also reduce its rate to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a ton per mile.

MR. EWING: To a farthing.

MR. HOLMAN: But when we consider that the Midland Railway Company would not have to pay for the trucks at all, that the whole of this cost would be borne by the State, that the company would not be subjected to long delays but would merely have to hitch their engine to a train-load of Collie coal and haul it over their line, the position is totally different from that in which the State stands. The State would have to find the whole of the rolling-stock for this service, which would be idle for the greater part of the time, or, at any rate, would be running empty on the return journey, whereas the Midland Company might be able to get back-loading; hence it would pay the Midland Company very well indeed to carry the coal at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile even when it would not pay the State to carry it at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The position of the Midland Company is in no way similar to that of the State, and therefore that argument need not be considered for a moment. The contention that Collie

coal might, if a reduction of freights were made, be used at Kalgoorlie could not be seriously considered, and for this reason, that the cost of the coal at Collie would be 10s.; railage to Kalgoorlie, 500 miles, at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile, would amount to 20s. 10d., or a total cost at Kalgoorlie of 30s. 10d., or if we reduced the haulage rate to $\frac{1}{2}$ d., the cost would be 25s. 8d. Firewood is at the present time being supplied at Kalgoorlie for use on the mines at 12s. per ton; and one and a-half tons of wood at this rate would amount to 18s. as against 25s. 8d. for a ton of Collie coal even at the proposed reduced rate for haulage. The contention is not to be seriously entertained, and has been brought forward merely for endeavouring to show that there is a future before Collie coal. In years to come—and I think it will be a great many years—the possibility of Collie coal being used on the Eastern Goldfields may be a reasonable one because of a then scarcity of firewood. But there is sufficient firewood on the route of the proposed Norseman Railway to supply the fuel requirements of the Eastern Goldfields for the next 10 years; and I would much prefer to see that line constructed than that the freight on Collie coal should be reduced, because for one man who would be benefited by obtaining employment as the result of assisting the coal industry, the construction of the Norseman Railway would provide employment for at least 10. Now what has been already done for Collie coal? A railway has been constructed from Collie to Collie-Boulder at a cost of about £20,000. Having regard to the number of collieries at Collie, the construction of that line was unnecessary, and I do not think that even now it is paying running expenses or anything near it; therefore the construction of that line has been an absolute waste of money. In 1904, when this question was first brought prominently before my notice as Minister for Railways, tenders had been called for the supply of a quantity of Collie coal, and the collieries then wanted 12s. 9d. for coal equal in calorific value to 11,000 British thermal units. They are supplying the same coal at the present time for 8s. 9d. a ton; so the fact that in 1904 they asked that exorbitant price of 12s. 9d. for an article which they are now supplying at 8s. 9d. shows that

the companies operating at Collie did not give that consideration to the interests of the State which they should have given. One reason why Collie coal has not received the favourable consideration which it might have got is because after the Government had given the collieries every consideration and assistance, so soon as the companies thought they had the Government of Western Australia in a tight corner, they endeavoured to extract an exorbitant price for the coal. I say this because I know it to be true, and I wish the Minister for Railways were here now that he might hear me say it. The Minister rather misled the House—unwittingly, I have no doubt—when he said the other evening that there were 377 miners engaged in the coal industry at Collie. I do not think there is anything near that number.

MR. EWING: Yes there is; the Minister's figures are quite right.

MR. HOLMAN: If the member for Collie has better information, I will give way to him every time; but I will read an extract from the report of the Inspector of Mines at Collie, Mr. J. D. Briggs, in which he said:—

There are 322 men employed in the mines—

MR. EWING: What date is that?

MR. HOLMAN: This report is dated 30th June, 1906; it is the latest issued, and is quite up to date. I think we may place more reliance on this report than on the statement of the Minister when he informed the House that there were 377 miners engaged in the industry. The Minister also stated that the wages sheets showed that the companies paid away £75,000 annually in wages. Now only 140,000 tons, or at the outside 150,000 tons of Collie coal are mined during the year, and the total value of this at the rate at which coal is at present being supplied to the Government is only £63,753, that is taking the average price of the coal at 8s. 6d.; so that there is a remarkable discrepancy. I do not know who supplied the Minister with his figures; but the figures I have quoted have been obtained from authentic sources.

MR. EWING: The Minister's figures are quite correct.

MR. HOLMAN: If the Minister's figures are correct, then the inspector can-

not be properly doing his duty when he says there are only 322 men employed in the mines altogether. Again, if the coal leases were properly manned, it would require 1,159 men to fulfil the labour conditions. Therefore I think the companies are being very liberally treated in being permitted to hold their ground and employ only 322 men, when according to the Act and to the figures taken from Dr. Jack's report it would require 1,159 men to properly man their leases.

MR. EWING: What could they do with them if they put them on?

MR. HOLMAN: I do not know what they could do with them; but if they cannot do anything with the ground, it would be just as well if they threw it up and let someone else take it. I strongly object to hundreds of acres of ground being held without the proper fulfilment of the labour conditions; and it has to be remembered that when the mining companies hold that land at Collie they hold also the timber rights of the land; so that I think the companies receive very great assistance indeed. Tenders were called after Dr. Jack's report was published. Therefore any prices sent in were based on what the coal companies knew in connection with that report, and the companies should be responsible for the prices they quoted. Something has been said about the Royal Commission in Victoria. That Commission was brought about at the instance of Labour members who strongly objected to the sweating system in the Victorian collieries. It was alleged that in those collieries men were at one time earning only 3s. or 4s. a day, and evidence was sworn to before the Commission to show that in some cases they were only earning 4s. or 5s. a day. So the allegations were pretty close. I do not intend to take any notice of the extracts from that Commission published in the *West Australian*. I prefer to peruse the report of the Commission myself, when it comes to hand, before I accept the statements of one who, in my opinion, is an interested party in the Collie coal question. In Clause 25 of Dr. Jack's report a little information is given to show the value of Collie coal. Members can read that clause themselves. It goes rather fully into the question of wood and coal, and shows that Collie

coal is out of the running altogether at present as a fuel on the goldfields. Clause 27 shows that the Commissioner of Railways did everything possible to foster the industry; even when it was known that Collie coal was almost useless for the railways, he used as much of it as it was possible for him to use on the railways with any degree of economy. The clause says:—

It is therefore unfortunate that for some time to come the very existence of the Western Australian coal industry must depend on the use of the Collie coal by the railways, the purpose for which it is least adapted. It is not that the locomotives cannot be run with Collie coal. They could be run with wood, although it is unlikely that they ever will.

This shows that Dr. Jack had a very poor opinion of Collie coal. He says that the coal will make the trains run, but he also says that wood would do the same. In Clause 29 he says:—

In his evidence Mr. George assumed that 161 tons of Collie would do the same work as 100 tons of Newcastle.

There is a discrepancy, because for every 100 tons of Newcastle coal we require 161 tons of Collie coal. That not only compels the railways to purchase and carry 161 tons of Collie coal to do the work of 100 tons of Newcastle, but we have also to recognise that on every ton of Collie coal purchased there is a loss to the State by the coal deteriorating. Dr. Jack desired that we should use the Collie coal when it is first mined, because that is when we could get best value from it; and that is the opinion of experts. I am sorry that it is so. I would rather see the local coal superior to the imported article. I am sorry to admit it is not. We must look at facts in the face. It is no use our saying that Collie coal is a good article when it is not. We must grasp the nettle with our hands firmly, and deal with it as soon as we possibly can. Dr. Jack says that the results of tests put in evidence would have justified the Commissioner in taking 164½ to 100 as the basis of his calculations.

MR. EWING: What did Dr. Jack say?

MR. HOLMAN: He brought it up to 170·5 in the case of Collie Cardiff. [MR. EWING: Do not worry about the Collie Cardiff.] The best was the Co-operative Company, 142·5. Then there was the

Collie Proprietary, 148; Scottish Collieries, 159; and Collie Cardiff, 170·5.

MR. EWING: Why do you not take Dr. Jack's report?

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. HOLMAN: I am doing so. That is in Clause 72. I have no desire to pick out any points to suit the argument I am using. Clause 87 shows the cost of one ton of Newcastle coal at the depôts, the price at Fremantle or Bunbury remaining as at present, 15s. 4d. per ton, and haulage being charged at the present rate on Collie coal. The costs are shown as—Fremantle, 18s.; Perth, 19s. 6½d.; Midland Junction, 19s. 11½d.; Northam, 22s. 3½d.; Southern Cross, 29s. 4½d.; Kalgoorlie, 35s. 2d.; and so on. Then we have a table showing the value of a ton of Collie coal at the depôts, with haulage at the present rate, the price of Newcastle coal remaining as at present. The values are given as—Fremantle, 6s. 9½d.; Perth, 8s. 5½d.; Midland Junction, 8s. 4½d.; and Kalgoorlie, 4s. 5½d. This table shows a vast difference. Another table shows the value of Collie coal at the depôts with haulage at a penny per ton per mile, the price of Newcastle coal remaining the same, reckoning one and a-third tons of Collie coal as equal to one ton of Newcastle coal. The figures are:—Fremantle, 2s. 2d.; Perth, 3s. 11d.; and Kalgoorlie, 3s. 10½d. So if we were to do what the member for Collie desires us to do, that is increase the haulage rate on Newcastle coal, we must put down the cost of the carriage of Collie coal on exactly the same basis. In Clause 105 we have the most important point in the report, in my opinion, showing the price per ton at the various depôts of Collie coal to the Railway Department, while Newcastle coal remains at 15s. 4d. per ton. The prices at the various stations are given, and the whole are bunched to give an average of 7s. 10½d., or say, in round numbers, 8s. per ton. We are at present paying an average price of 8s. 6d. to 8s. 9d.

MR. EWING: Why do you not quote fairly?

MR. HOLMAN: This is a table. It is all very fine for the hon. member to make out that I am quoting tables that do not show the position. He picked out tables to suit his own arguments.

I am not doing that. If we were to say that it costs $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton more per mile to carry Newcastle coal than it costs to carry Collie coal, we should arrive at the position the member for Collie has already arrived at; but my argument is that it costs exactly as much to carry Collie coal as to carry Newcastle coal, and when we use the two coals on our railways, that is the whole crux of the question. If we had been going to sell Collie coal to consumers outside the Railway Department, by all means we should give the industry every possible consideration; but when we consider the cost of consumption of the coal on the railways, I say that the cost per ton of carrying Newcastle coal should be exactly the same as the cost of carrying a ton of Collie coal, no more and no less. The table in Clause 105 gives the average price of coal to be consumed on our railways. The Commissioner of Railways has been condemned for his attitude in regard to the Collie coal, but Dr. Jack throughout his report has given the Commissioner credit for the manner in which he has dealt with the coal. Dr. Jack says in Clause 109:—

Mr. George, in a perfectly just and business-like manner, takes as the basis of his calculations that the "non-paying traffic" of hauling coal for his own use is carried on in all cases, whether the coal be native or imported, at cost price (including interest on capital), which he reckons at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile. He thus makes no surplus on the transaction, after paying interest on capital. That he carries coal for his own use at cost price is a fact which no system of bookkeeping can alter. But to calculate the price of Collie coal on the equitable basis that a ton and a third of it should be carried at the same cost as a ton of Newcastle coal enables him to purchase the coal at a very substantial reduction on the present price of 11s. On an annual railway consumption of 115,514 tons, as in 1903-4, a reduction of 3s. per ton in the price of the coal would amount to £17,327, and a reduction of 1s. to £5,775.

That is just about the reduction we get on the consumption of Collie coal. The Labour Government were condemned in this respect, but we have been saving something like £15,000 on Collie coal on our railways since the Labour Government took charge of affairs. We all know that the price to private consumers will be based on the price paid by the railways, but I agree with Dr. Jack that the latter should not

be taken as a basis. It has been pointed out and proved beyond doubt that Collie coal is more valuable at the price to outside consumers than to the railways. In Clause 114 we come to Dr. Jack's recommendations. I have quoted his recommendation as regards securing the whole of the output from one mine to reduce the costs of management. The member for Guildford has gone into that aspect fully, and it is no use my repeating his arguments. Dr. Jack's recommendation regarding employment is very fair, and we must all give him credit for going into the question very carefully and fully. He states that the amount we should give as a bonus to the companies should be about £2,300, providing that the total price does not exceed 9s. 6d. per ton; and it does not exceed that price at present. I shall endeavour to quote exactly what we are paying to the Collie coal companies over and above the price at which they tendered to supply the coal a few months ago. My totals of coal supplied are approximately near the mark. The basis of the supply of Collie coal as agreed to at the present time is that the Proprietary supplies 45 per cent., and the three other companies have the other 55 per cent. equally divided among them. I think that is the information supplied to this House in reply to questions last year. When prices of Collie coal were submitted some time ago they were based on 11,000 British thermal units of calorific value. We know that the present Government have reduced the calorific value down to 10,500 units, this meaning that they give a 5 per cent. increase to the whole of the collieries at Collie on their tendered prices. The Co-operative Company offered to supply on the basis of 11,000 British thermal units of calorific value at 8s. 10d., the Scottish Collieries at 8s. 5½d., the Proprietary at 8s. 2d., and the Cardiff at 7s. 9d. The calorific values of the coal supplied are: Co-operative 10,833 British thermal units, Scottish Collieries 10,302, the Proprietary 10,560, and the Cardiff 9,571. The value of these coals at prices tendered according to the calorific value as supplied to this State would be as follows: the Co-operative 8s. 8½d., the Scottish Collieries 7s. 11d., the Proprietary 7s. 10d., and the Cardiff 6s. 9d. The amounts per ton we are paying to these

companies at the present time are as follow: to the Co-operative 8s. 9d., Scottish Collieries 8s., Proprietary 8s. 9d., and the Cardiff 7s. 9d. The bonus per ton, reckoning the difference of these prices, is as follows: The Co-operative 2d., the Scottish Collieries 1d., the Proprietary 11d., and the Cardiff 1s. The coal supplied to the State annually is as follows (figures approximate, but the totals near the exact amount): 20,000 tons from the Co-operative, 20,000 from the Scottish Collieries, 50,000 from the Proprietary, and 20,000 from the Cardiff. The bonus granted by the Government on coal supplied to the State, over the amount tendered, is as follows: Co-operative £40, Scottish Collieries £80, Proprietary £2,290, and Cardiff £1,000. The total output for the year is estimated at 144,000 tons, made up as follows:—Co-operative 28,000, Scottish Collieries 28,000, Proprietary 60,000, and Cardiff 28,000. We not only give them a bonus over and above the tendered price, but a rebate of royalty at 3d. per ton, the amounts being—Co-operative £350, Scottish Collieries £350, Proprietary £750, and Cardiff £350, making a total of £1,800. I remember that at one time a proportion of the coal of the Proprietary mine had to pay a royalty of 6d. per ton, but I am basing my figures on 3d. per ton royalty. The assistance granted by this State per year to collieries at Collië since tenders were called for the supply of Collië coal last year is as follows:—To the Co-operative £390, to the Scottish Collieries £430, to the Proprietary £3,040, and to the Cardiff £1,350; making a total altogether of £5,210. That shows that we are granting fair assistance to the collieries even at the present rates which we are paying for our coal. It is as much as the State can bear, and I am not inclined to agree to any farther grants. We notice here that two companies are not receiving a great deal. The other companies, namely the Proprietary and the Collië Cardiff, are receiving considerate treatment from the Government at the present time. The figures I quote are the figures at which those companies offered to supply coal. It will be said that they tendered on the basis of supplying the whole amount. If that be so, it does not make any difference. This State has to foot the bill and

pay the extra cost. It does not matter if it is divided between the four companies. If instead of keeping four companies going we had given the contract to one company, we should have saved at present rates some £5,210 a year. I do not know why the Proprietary and Cardiff should be favoured to a greater extent than the other two collieries. We know that the present Government reduced the calorific value from 11,000 down to 10,500, so that the figures they may quote to rebut the argument I have brought forward will not pan out the same as if they placed the calorific value at 11,000 British thermal units. I think that at the present time instead of the representatives of that district coming here and asking us to adopt Dr. Jack's report, they should in the first place adopt some of Dr. Jack's recommendations themselves, and amalgamate their mines into one company. If they did that, they would save some hundreds of pounds per year in regard to the cost of management, upkeep of extra machinery, extra running along the Collië-Boulder line a distance of six or eight miles, and a lot of other expenses, which could be brought down. There are expenses to be paid in the old country, and we all know that every manager and every officer on the mine is a non-producer, and those who are producing the coal have to produce an extra amount to pay for those doing nothing on the colliery. I maintain that, instead of having to pay all these managers and officers on those mines, it would be far better if the amount they receive were pooled and divided amongst those engaged in the industry. As long as I am in the House I intend to do all I can to foster the Collië coal industry, but I am not going to do it in a blindfold manner. I want to know what it costs this State. [Interjection by MR. BUTCHER.] The member for Gascoyne says, "Do not forget what it costs the farmers." I may say that the matter referred to by the hon. member took a very blazing light at the time I happened to be Minister for Railways. With all the sins that the Collië coal has to bear, from the knowledge I have I think that the Collië coal is responsible for only a very few of the fires that have been caused along our railways. The Collië coal has to bear enough sins without that. And never to

my mind has a clear case of guilt been proved against the Collie coal. Even in Northern districts, where fires occur, never has the Collie coal been responsible for fires. We have had bigger fires and fires as disastrous along the Midland line, where they did not use Collie coal at all. We have had bush fires in the State where there is not an ounce of Collie coal used, and, in spite of the Collie coal not being the article we should like it to be, I am going to stand up and defend it against the charge of any sins it is not guilty of.

MR. EWING: It is very good of you.

MR. HOLMAN: The main object of the member for Collie is to get reduced rates on our railways. The railways are carrying Collie coal at the very lowest possible rate at the present time, the charge being $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile from Collie to Perth. Of course, when we go outside that range of railway, on account of the Federal constitution we cannot reduce the freight on Collie coal, unless we reduce the freight on Newcastle coal as well. The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) dealt with the argument of the member for Collie as to inferior coal being carried at a lower rate than a superior article. It will be a very poor thing for us to reckon that Collie coal costs so much less than Newcastle coal. (Interjection.) Dr. Jack dealt with the question very well. He referred to the matter of saccharine and sugar. If he would look at our rates on the railways and use the argument of brown sugar *versus* white sugar, it would be much nearer the point. There is a vast difference between the two articles, yet they have to pay the same freight. Reference has been made to the carriage of goldfield ores. In relation to the whole of the ore carried from the goldfields, there is back loading, whereas the case in regard to carrying Collie coal is different, for the trucks run back empty. It would cost almost as much to run those trucks back to the goldfields empty as it would to run them back laden, so that the argument used is not sound. If we reduced the freight of Collie coal to carry the coal to the fields, we should have to run the trucks up full, and run them back empty. While I am prepared to do all in my power to foster and encourage the Collie coal industry, I want to see the

exact cost published in figures, and I do not want the railways to have to bear the brunt of the whole burden. I want people to know the exact assistance given by the Government, and members may depend upon my doing all that I can to foster the industry, but not more than I think necessary. While we must give every consideration to the industry employing 322 men, it would be very unwise to foster 322 and do away with an industry employing between 3,000 and 4,000 in cutting wood for the goldfields. If instead of doing that we reduced the cost of carriage of firewood sent over our railways to the Murchison goldfields to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton, we should get quite sufficient wood for that district.

On motion by MR. MONGER, debate adjourned.

BILL—PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): In moving the second reading of this measure, I would like to point out that it is one that has been dealt with in another place. It provides for a slight amendment to enable certain alterations to be made in the Prisons Act of 1903. Provision is made for taking the photograph, finger-prints, measurements, and other particulars of any prisoner, and recording the same. It is a purely formal measure.

MR. TAYLOR: Some of them get there through finger-prints.

THE PREMIER: Yes. Section 59 of the principal Act is amended by inserting the words "or attempts to escape" after the word "escape." The section will then read as follows:—

Any person who, being a prisoner in lawful custody under sentence after conviction for an offence, escapes or attempts to escape from such custody, is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment with or without hard labour for any term not exceeding three years.

This is purely a formal measure, and I do not think there is any necessity for discussion on the question. I therefore have pleasure in formally moving the second reading of the Bill.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): The Premier has characterised this as a formal measure, and in view of the fact that it only contains three clauses it may at first

sight appear somewhat formal; but that alteration in Section 59 of the principal Act is not at all formal so far as it concerns the unfortunate prisoner. On numerous occasions throughout the gaols of the State the police authorities have practically placed a premium upon escape, have as it were left the door wide open. After a prisoner has, owing to the very natural instinct of any man who is in confinement, availed himself of the opportunity of getting out of goal, the heaviest penalty will be inflicted upon him under this measure; and the Bill will mean that not only an actual escape from prison, but any attempt to escape, will render the prisoner liable to an additional sentence of three years with hard labour. While it is of course necessary to provide some penalty as a deterrent from escapes, and some form of punishment for attempts to escape, it is altogether out of reason that such a penalty as the Bill proposes should be inflicted. Rather should the energies of those in charge of our prisons be directed to planning a system which will prevent escapes and will not place temptation in prisoners' way. As to the provisions of the Bill, in view of the fact that throughout the civilised world the system of identifying prisoners by means of finger-prints and measurements has been adopted, no exception can be taken to Clause 1; but time should be given for consideration before we adopt such a provision as is embodied in Clause 2 of this small amending Bill.

MR. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle): Although this is a purely formal Bill, I think that there is at least a danger in the proposed amendment of Section 59 of the existing Act. One does not like to give voice to innuendoes, or to cast suspicion on those officials responsible for keeping prisoners in gaol. Still, we must recognise that they are responsible for the safe custody of prisoners; and as the principal Act provides a term of three years' imprisonment for escaping from prison, it is altogether out of proportion that the same term should be awarded to an attempt at escape. The clause will be a lever by which gaol officials may falsely charge prisoners, and make them liable to additional imprisonment, though no attempt has been made to escape. Let a

prisoner be missed for perhaps two minutes, and a charge of attempted escape can be laid against him.

THE TREASURER: It will have to be proved.

MR. BOLTON: It will have to be proved; but what chance has a prisoner of defending himself against a charge laid by the gaol officials? Absolutely none. The word of the gaoler, and especially the chief gaoler, will be taken in preference to that of a whole batch of prisoners, if they numbered 20. It is very easy to prove such a charge against a prisoner already confined. The danger lies in providing such a severe term of confinement for a person who attempts to escape.

THE PREMIER: What punishment would you suggest for such a prisoner?

MR. BOLTON: It is natural for every prisoner to try to regain his liberty. It is the duty of the gaol officials to keep him secure. From the revenue of the country gaols are built and gaol officials' salaries paid. If a prisoner does escape, he is not only caught and put back in confinement, but receives an additional sentence. But it is most absurd to go to the length the Bill proposes by giving a man three years for attempted escape. I hope that this clause amending Section 59 will be struck out. I am entirely in accord with Clause 1, introducing the system of identification by finger-prints, photographs, measurements, and so on, for these methods are adopted throughout the civilised world; but I fail to see the necessity for Clause 2. If a prisoner escapes, some punishment should possibly be inflicted in addition to his being again confined. But as to punishment for attempted escape, the proposal would not be so objectionable if the penalty were imposed only in cases where an escape had actually been attempted. But I am of opinion that out of spite and with a desire for vengeance prisoners will be charged with attempted escape when to escape has never entered their minds, and they will then be liable to three years' additional imprisonment. Far better delete this proviso than run the risk of having a person charged with an offence of which he is innocent.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): Before the second reading passes, I would

suggest that time be given for farther consideration. From merely hearing the Premier read the section proposed to be amended in the principal Act, one can hardly be expected to form an intelligent opinion of this Bill; therefore an adjournment will be only fair. But that being objected to, I respectfully submit to the Premier that he postpone the Committee stage until Thursday at the earliest, to give members an opportunity for consideration. One would naturally think that a Bill printed upon a single sheet of paper could not be very formidable; but when it proposes to amend a section dealing with the punishment of prisoners, we should have an opportunity of fully considering the amendment. I have no objection to punishing a prisoner for escaping, but I think we should carefully consider whether we should place on our statute-book a law which will so materially affect prisoners. The whole result will hinge on what is an attempt to escape. Who is to be the judge? As members who sit with me have pointed out, the door will to some extent be left open for abuse. It is natural that a prisoner should try to escape. Not only human beings but all animals in captivity have a natural desire to regain their liberty. I object to the great power the Bill would place in the hands of those directly controlling prisons to decide whether a prisoner has attempted to escape. I have some knowledge of the inside of these establishments; and as has been pointed out by the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Bolton), by no possible stretch of imagination can it be believed that a prisoner charged with attempting to escape could establish his innocence, especially when he is tried within the four walls of the prison by the visiting justice, who is probably the resident magistrate of the town in which the prison is located. The only witness a prisoner could call in his defence would be other prisoners, to prove that he did not attempt to escape, while the whole force of the establishment would be arrayed against him to prove that he did make the attempt. We know that prison warders are like all other human beings, very liable to err; and if they make a mistake by neglect or oversight in leaving some portion of the prison unsecured,

and the prisoner is found looking in an inquisitive mood to see what is going on, he will be charged with attempting to escape. It is rather too much that the Premier should expect the House to pass without consideration a measure imposing an additional sentence of three years for such an offence. If a free man is charged with a crime, he is tried in open court. If he has the money, he can retain the flower of the bar to defend him; and laws passed to deal with free men need not be scrutinised with such vigilance by this House as laws to deal with the unfortunate people who are in prison and who have none to defend them. I am sorry that the Premier desires to rush the Bill through with such rapidity. [THE PREMIER: No.] I think it is fair, after moving the second reading of any measure, whether formal or non-formal, that the debate should be adjourned for at least a day or two to give members an opportunity for considering the Bill.

THE PREMIER: I thought that the Bill amended only one section.

MR. TAYLOR: It seeks to amend Section 59 of the principal Act; and I am sure one would have to be fairly well acquainted with the principal Act, and to have had something to do with drafting this Bill, to be able to understand from the Premier's speech the nature of the proposed amendment. I have no desire to oppose the second reading, but shall require more evidence from the Minister in charge of the measure before it goes through Committee without my opposition.

THE PREMIER (in reply as mover): It would have been as well perhaps if I had had more information in regard to this short measure; but I had only an opportunity of looking at the measure, and did not know really the reason why this clause amending the principal Act is necessary. I understand that the two sections preceding the one now proposed to be amended provide that where a person rescues or attempts to rescue any prisoner, or aids a prisoner to escape or attempt to escape, he is liable to a penalty. This clause only provides for where the prisoner escapes, and not where he attempts to escape. I take it that it will meet the view of hon. members if the Committee stage be fixed for Thursday in next week.

Question put and passed.
Bill read a second time.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

COUNCIL'S MESSAGE.

Message from the Legislative Council, requesting the concurrence of the Assembly in an amendment made and an amendment suggested, was now considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 2—Amendment of Schedule to Act:

THE TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson) moved—

That in Clause 2, line 6, the Council's amendment be agreed to, namely to insert the words "by proclamation in the *Government Gazette*," after the word "exempt," in Subclause (a).

Question passed.

Suggested amendment in Subclause (b):

THE TREASURER moved that the request made by the Legislative Council be agreed to, namely to insert at the end of the subclause the words, "for goods exceeding half a ton, sixpence." The effect would be to reduce the charge on goods of this kind from 1s. to 6d in coastwise vessels.

MR. DAGLISH: Had the Treasurer considered the powers of another place in regard to making amendments in a Bill of this kind, because to interfere with the charge for stamps on certain shipping goods was interfering with the revenue of the State? It would be seen also that in the message from another place these words appeared: "The Legislative Council requests the Legislative Assembly to make the following amendment in this subclause," and so on. The particulars showed the amendment made. Had he noticed this peculiar wording of the message before going into Committee on it, he would have brought it under the notice of Mr. Speaker.

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. F. Illingworth): The Legislative Council had not made this amendment, but was asking this House to make the amendment.

MR. TAYLOR: The message said the Council had agreed to this Bill, subject to certain conditions. One condition was

to insert the words set forth in the first amendment, and the Treasurer ought to assure the House that he had gone into the question and satisfied himself that these amendments to a Bill dealing with revenue were within the powers of another place. It was idle to say that these amendments came before this House as suggestions from another place. They were really the conditions on which another place had agreed to pass the Bill. This House should see that amendments or suggestions from another place were strictly in order.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Constitution Act gave power to the Legislative Council only to suggest amendments to this House in regard to Bills dealing with the public revenue, and did not give power to the Council to make such amendments.

THE TREASURER: If the word "request," which appeared in the message, was taken in its ordinary sense, members would see there was no attempt to interfere with the privileges of this House.

MR. DAGLISH: Read the schedule accompanying the message.

THE TREASURER agreed that the message was not couched in language that was usual in such cases. The Council had made one amendment; but in regard to the second amendment, they offered a suggestion, and asked this House to concur in it by making the amendment suggested. The second amendment, referring to the amount of the stamp to be charged on certain goods, was the only one which this House need concern itself about on a question of privilege, because the Council had no power to make any amendment which interfered with the finances of the State. He frankly admitted that the Council ought to have suggested the amendment, and should not have sent a request that this House should make the amendment. It was apparent from the wording of the message, that the Council did not intend to make the amendment, as otherwise they would have made it and then requested this House to concur in it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Section 46 of the Constitution Act provided, in reference to Money Bills:—

The Legislative Council may at any stage return it (Bill) to the Legislative Assembly with a message requesting the omission or

amendment of any items or provisions therein; and the Legislative Assembly may, if it thinks fit, make such omissions or any of them, with or without modifications.

MR. BOLTON: The message was worded in a peculiar way, for it said the Legislative Council agreed to the Bill "subject to the amendments contained in the schedule annexed, in which amendments the Legislative Council desires the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly." If that was not asking the concurrence of this House in an amendment made by the Council, he did not know what it could mean.

MR. BATH suggested that as there was no urgency in regard to this Bill, the Treasurer might agree to report progress and have the matter looked into, so that the Council's request might come before this House in proper form.

MR. TAYLOR: The Treasurer should act on the suggestion just made. It was patent to members that it was necessary for this House to retain its powers; and as we had heard a great deal lately about the dignity of this Chamber, he hoped Parliament had sufficient dignity left not to allow itself to be ridden over roughshod by another branch of the Legislature.

THE TREASURER: None would stand up more than he for the rights of this Chamber against encroachment by another body, if the encroachment were made wilfully; but there was complete evidence in this case to show that there was no wilful intention to usurp a power that did not belong to the Legislative Council. That the word "request" had been omitted from the first portion of the message could be taken as an oversight, seeing that the proper word had been used in the schedule.

MR. BOLTON: "Request" was not the proper word.

THE TREASURER: Surely the hon. member could accept the ruling of the Chairman, who had just read the Act governing the matter.

MR. DAGLISH: Both amendments should have come as suggestions.

THE TREASURER: One amendment was a technical matter regarding an advertisement in the *Government Gazette*. In regard to the other amendment, the Legislative Council had seen that, because

it took the form of taxation, they could not make an amendment; but they had erroneously taken the view in the other matter that they could make an amendment. As it was surely evident that this had been done inadvertently, why should we cause trouble? There was no objection to progress being reported if it was the wish of members.

MR. DAGLISH: The duty of the Treasurer and members was very clear, not to argue about the question in Committee, nor to ask the Chairman to define the rights and privileges of the Assembly, but to refer the matter to the Speaker, who as one guarding the privileges and rights of members should be afforded an opportunity of giving a ruling on the point at the next sitting of the House.

MR. FOULKES: Members were unduly anxious about the matter. There might be some technical error as regards the wording of the message, but this was not an important Bill.

MR. BOLTON: It was a question of precedent.

MR. DAGLISH: It was a very thin wedge.

MR. FOULKES: It was not a matter of precedent, and there was no wedge about it. Mistakes of this kind had been made by other Legislatures. May mentioned that the House of Commons had frequently accepted amendments made by the House of Lords. He said:—

If not otherwise objectionable, the Commons will accept amendments made by the Lords which, though not strictly regular, do not materially infringe the privileges of the Commons.

The amendment made by the Legislative Council in this case did not materially infringe the privileges of the Assembly. The member for Mt. Margaret had said we did not wish to have trouble over a matter of this kind; and as this was a trifling error, the member for Subiaco could overlook it. There was no need for one House to be continually looking for breaches of its privileges by another House. We desired to get on well with the other House, and not to send back messages over technical errors.

MR. DAGLISH: The suggestion was to refer the matter to the Speaker.

MR. FOULKES: It was not necessary to do that. Members knew the privileges of the House. It was not necessary on a

small matter of this kind to raise a question of privilege.

THE TREASURER: Seeing that it was the wish of members, he moved that progress be reported and leave be asked to sit again.

Motion passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

BILL—LAND TAX ASSESSMENT.

MACHINERY MEASURE.

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the 14th August.

MR. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): I do not think that the measure before us requires many words on my part. It is recognised by anyone who has studied our financial position that we in Western Australia must adopt one of two alternatives. We must either increase the revenue by the imposition of additional taxation, or very materially reduce our expenditure. In fact there is great justification for the opinion that at an early date we shall have to adopt both courses, because we have already lost about £200,000 a year through the reduction in customs duties, due to the abolition of our local tariff; and in addition to that it is estimated that we will suffer a loss, owing to additional Commonwealth expenditure, in the present financial year of a sum of about £100,000; while we may lose to a considerable extent in the following and subsequent years by farther encroachments on our revenue on the part of the Commonwealth Government. Alongside this diminishing revenue we have an annually increasing demand for interest and sinking fund. Our yearly provision for interest and sinking fund now reaches almost a million pounds. I do not intend to go into figures to-night dealing with the question; but I wish to impress on members the fact that each year this sinking fund and interest provision is growing larger, and that if the Government carry out their expressed policy of borrowing farther and heavily for the purpose of development work, necessarily in the near future there must be a farther increase as a result of such a loan to the bill we have to meet for sinking fund and interest. We may perhaps expect the Government to reduce expendi-

ture in a certain number of directions, in the shape of unnecessary administrative charges, because from time to time there do occur small opportunities of making a certain amount of saving in our different departments. Very often departments grow without its being noticed. They seem to be continually in a state of growth, until suddenly a Minister finds out when the demands for expenditure become too heavy that he can reduce his staff or make certain savings in his expenditure. In spite of these savings that can be made, we must either get new sources of revenue or reduce in a large degree the assistance we give to our agriculturists and to those persons engaged in our mining and pastoral industries. I think the House is pretty well with the Government in their suggestion that certain railways should be built to help our agricultural settlers. I think the House is pretty well with the Government also in their proposal to build one railway to help the mining population. I believe the House as a whole regards the help given to municipalities and roads districts as a help that cannot properly with wisdom be withdrawn. Personally I regard this help as one of the most important features of the public works policy of any Government. The money spent on roads and bridges, whether by municipalities or roads boards, is as important in developing the State as is money spent on railways, so long as the money is wisely expended; and according to my observation of the workings of municipalities and roads districts, there is every reason to believe that the local bodies are doing very good work in the manner in which, on the whole, they expend the moneys given to them. We are then faced with this position: we must materially curtail our expenditure or get a material addition to our revenue from a new form of taxation. We have continual outcries about the extent to which our people are taxed; but, as a matter of fact, outside our customs tariff—and we are making a saving by the abolition of the local tariff of about £200,000 which remains in the pockets of the people of the State—Western Australians are practically untaxed at the present moment. The only tax that now returns any large amount of money is the dividend duty.

There is no other substantial local tax in existence in Western Australia at the present moment. Of course there are such little taxes as the stamp duties, the probate duties, and the totalisator tax; but the only large revenue-producing taxation existent in this State at the present time is the dividend duty. Unfortunately few of our local people are touched by that duty. Unfortunately the bulk of it is paid on dividends that go outside the State altogether. If it be necessary to impose new taxation, we have to find the fairest method to be adopted, and to try to make the tax as equitable as possible; by that I mean that it shall touch as far as possible equally all those in the community equally able to pay it. My complaint against the proposal of the Government is that it does not do that. My complaint is that it is only a partial proposal, because it imposes a tax on one section of the community only, and lets other sections go scot-free. For instance, it will impose a tax solely on the man who is the registered owner of a fee simple of land, leaving out of the question for the present moment any reference to leaseholds. Where it is dealing with the freehold only, the man in possession of the land is taxed. If there be two partners in joint possession they are equally liable to the tax, each to his own share; but there is a very large proportion of people in this State possessed of land who have been compelled to mortgage that land, and whilst if Smith and Jones jointly own £1,000 worth of land each of them is liable for the tax on half of it, and one can recover against the other, yet if Smith, instead of taking a partner, has mortgaged the property for £500, he is still in all respects only the owner of half that property in reality, and whether the land produces or fails to produce, he is paying to the mortgagee anything from 5 to 7 per cent. on the money that has been borrowed, and the mortgagee, who is drawing a certain amount of income, will be absolutely untouched by this Bill. I contend that any measure of taxation which aims at imposing a tax on land values is not a fair and equitable proposal, unless it taxes equally the man who draws revenue or has the opportunity of drawing revenue from the land, whether he draws revenue from it as

owner or as mortgagee. [Interjection.] I quite admit that the mortgagee would make the owner pay, if it were stipulated by a clause in our Land Tax Bill; but everywhere, or almost everywhere, where a land tax of a general nature has been introduced, it has been accompanied by an income tax as well, and the one machinery Bill could be made to serve the purposes of both taxes. I do not wish to argue here that it is desirable to impose any unnecessary tax, but I do wish to assert that we must, if we are going to tax one section of the community, tax every other section equally able to bear taxation; and if we are going to impose a tax on the landowner, whether he be a city landowner, a country landowner, an agriculturist, a pastoralist, or a town resident, we should likewise impose a tax on every other individual in the community who is drawing an income from the community, and is equally able to meet that tax. And the only way in which we can do it is to have this land tax accompanied by an income tax proposal, which will exempt those who pay the land tax from any payment in regard to the income tax in relation to land on which they have been assessed. Take, for instance, one class of men—and there is a fair number of them in this and every other State—a class entirely untouched by this proposal. A man goes in for the occupation of a money-lender, and makes it his business to lend from £5 to £500 or £5,000. He makes considerable profit, and perhaps he does not own an acre of land. He is a non-producer, and is living on the efforts of those who hold and use land. Yet, though a most deserving object to any Treasurer seeking to find someone to tax, he would escape under this Land Taxation Bill.

MR. BATH: Perhaps he does not press his deserts before the public.

MR. DAGLISH: He never advertises his capacity as a taxpayer. The Treasurer might make a note of that. He might, indeed, make a good many notes if he chose to adopt this income tax proposal. Take another example, that of people who dodge all taxation practically at the present time, and will escape it under this Bill except to an infinitesimal extent. I refer to a big merchantile firm. It happens very likely to be a foreign

firm, that is a foreign firm to this State. Take a firm, for instance, like that of Foy & Gibson, doing an enormous business and drawing enormous profits from the State, but escaping the provisions of the dividend duty because it is not a limited liability company, and making no contribution whatever to the revenue of this State. It is a reasonable thing that if we are going to tax the man who is occupying and working our land we should likewise tax the man who is a merchant and makes a big income, and who under this Bill will only pay the tax on the premises he happens to occupy for his business. [Interjection.] The hon. member points out that in some cases he may absolutely escape, and the tax may be paid by the landlord. I have not very much confidence in his escaping in that fashion. I have only cited the one firm as an illustration of my argument, that if we are going to have a tax it should fall equally on those equally able to contribute to the revenue of this State, and equally deriving benefits which the State can confer and does confer on all its citizens, equally helped by the increase of population which new works constructed by the Government draw to the State. There is no reason why these large mercantile firms, professional firms, and large business people of Perth should not be required to contribute, simply because they happen to hold a very small area of land, although they are drawing very large revenues from following their avocations. It has been alleged by the Minister for Works that the objection by the Government to an income tax is that an income tax is a tax on the energy and enterprise of the citizen. But as a matter of fact we cannot find any tax which is not to a large extent a tax on the energy and enterprise of the people. The man who is most energetic is commonly the man who is most successful, and very likely the man who is most successful is possessed of the largest area of taxable land. Naturally the man who has least land will escape most lightly under this measure. Whatever avenue a man directs his energy into, if he be also capable, he is more likely to be successful than a man of less energy, and under the land tax proposals we necessarily tax most heavily the most successful man.

And it is only right that we should do so, because the tax should fall most heavily on the man whose shoulders are broad enough to bear the heaviest portion of the burden. I would therefore urge the Government to reconsider their proposal to make the Bill one which relates only to a tax on land, and to bring in some clauses relating to the taxation of incomes, which shall be a corollary to the machinery in regard to land. By doing so they will not only be helping the Treasury, but at the same time they will be making their tax more equitable than it can be while one class alone is touched by the measure. I do not intend to go at any length into the different provisions of the Bill. But I desire to say it seems to me unwise and inequitable, if there are to be exemptions, to have those exemptions falling unequally. If the Bill is to be a tax on values, then the values should be equal both in city and in the country. The exemptions, if there be exemptions, should be alike, no matter where the land is situated, or for what purpose it is used. If the tax is to be one on land values, it should be really and solely on values. Many members, with whom I do not agree, are prepared to oppose exemptions altogether. I am not prepared to join them, but at the same time I should certainly assist them to have these exemptions made as low in the country as they are in the city, or made as high in the city as they are in the country. It seems to me an entirely new departure in legislation that we shall provide one particular rate of exemption for one particular class—a lower exemption than for anyone else. In other words, we propose to tax the man who owns a small block of land worth £60, say, in the city. We propose to tax him for that little block on which his home is situated. But there is a stronger reason, or one that may perhaps appear stronger to the Treasurer, why he should increase these exemptions, that is, that it will not pay him for the work of assessment, collection, and bookkeeping, to collect this amount of say $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the pound on £60, the sum being about 4s. in the case of people who own a house on perhaps a suburban or city block worth about £60.

MR. SCADDAN: Will they not have to be assessed?

MR. DAGLISH: No; there is a provision that the assessment shall be made by the individual in all cases; that the individual shall send in a form; but there is no absolute necessity that the form shall be embodied in the assessment books of the Treasury.

MR. BATH: In other States they do embody it.

MR. DAGLISH: It is not at all necessary. And it should not be done, because it creates a great deal of unnecessary expense. It should not be done unless the Treasurer finds out that some particular individuals have been making false statements in regard to the value of their property. That would be the only object that would be gained by entering in the assessment books the assessment of these properties which are not of a taxable value. And I believe that from this point of view the cost of collection involved in collecting this 4s. from different individuals who happen to own a block of land worth £60, either on the goldfields, in the country towns, in Perth, or in the suburbs, would be so great that the Government would find that they would lose more than they would gain by getting any return at all on those lands. The Government in any case is laying out for itself a great store of difficulty in regard to the provisions for the rebate. It will first of all require to have a numerous staff of land officers travelling the country continually to inspect lands for the purpose of discovering to what extent they are improved. It will take years before the Treasurer is able to verify in the first instance through the Lands Department a lot of the returns sent in. Every member who has had any experience of the Lands Department is aware that the work of inspection for the purposes of land tax is behind time in that department, and that the officers have not been able to catch up with the work for some years past, and there is really some years' work to be done before the first returns under the Land Tax Act can be checked throughout the State. The Government will therefore find great difficulty in giving effect to their well-intentioned provisions; and I should like to see it found practicable to give some rebate to the man who does improve his property. At the same time the provisions now suggested seem

to offer a loophole of escape to the man whose improvements are very trifling indeed—a very great loophole when we consider that one subclause provides that—

Any improvements made on any one parcel of such land shall extend to any other parcel belonging to the same owner, if such parcels of land are not a greater distance apart than 10 miles, measured from the nearest boundaries.

In other words, if the one owner has two entirely separate properties at a distance nearly as great as that between Perth and Fremantle, and has made very slight improvements on one property and none at all on the other, the improvements on the first will entirely exempt him from any tax in respect of the second and unimproved property.

THE TREASURER: He will have to pay a tax on the property.

MR. DAGLISH: The provision on the Notice Paper is as I have read.

THE TREASURER: The owner will get a rebate.

MR. DAGLISH: I fail to see how the Treasurer can argue that the effect of his proposed amendment to Clause 10 will not be as I say—to give a man a rebate who owns two properties and has improved one, providing that the nearest boundaries of the two properties are not more than 10 miles apart. An hon. member raises the point that the owner may have doubly improved one of the properties. But that is not provided in the amendment. He is required to improve to a certain extent only; and the prescribed improvement is very slight. The contention of agricultural members all along, since I have been in the House, is that our conditions of improvement under the Land Act are altogether too light; that it is too easy to shepherd land, to hold it for speculative purposes, thus keeping off the man who wishes to take it up, improve it, and put it to some practical use. Yet we are again adopting those very easy conditions, and are giving to the man who is holding the land and merely complying with the slight requirements of the Land Act, the same rebate that we are giving to the man who is employing to improve his land every pound he has in the world, and who is doing his utmost to work the property to its fullest capacity. And I am afraid that in this very clause we are

giving a great opportunity to the land speculator to get off far more cheaply than he should, and are not giving that advantage to the genuine agriculturist that he ought to get over the man who is holding the land for speculative purposes merely, in the hope of a big profit hereafter. I think, too, in this connection, that the Government might well introduce the graduation principle with a view to breaking up some of the large estates. I should not begin the graduation at too low a value, but I do think the principle of graduation should be adopted; and this Government or its successor will one day have to face the question, and it should be faced early, of bringing into cultivation the land lying idle along our railway lines. Something will have to be done to give the *bona fide* agriculturist a chance of settling on some of the land lying idle right up against some of our railways; and I was hopeful that the measure introduced for land taxation purposes would have dealt with this question, especially after I had read some of those able remarks of the Honorary Minister (Hon. J. Mitchell) which have appeared on two or three occasions in the Press, and in which he very strongly urged what I now contend for, that the Government should do its utmost to secure the utilisation of those valuable lands lying unused adjacent to every railway through an agricultural district in Western Australia. I hope that the hon. member will in this matter have some influence with his colleagues, and will use that influence to induce them to give effect to the opinions he has on several occasions voiced to representatives of the Press. As to the method of valuation, here again the Government has provided for itself a very heavy burden of expense; and I think that a great proportion of such expense might be saved—at all events, much inspection could be avoided—if the Government had adopted that principle tried successfully in New Zealand, of making every land-holder his own valuator, requiring land-holders to value their properties with the condition that the Government may effect a compulsory purchase at, say, a ten-per-cent. advance on the valuations. The Government might, I think, very well save a large sum of money by adopting this compulsory purchase if

unduly large valuations were submitted by the owners. This would save an army of inspectors, and very much check-work. Last night the Premier told us that his intention was to get the local bodies to do the valuating. I pointed out while he was speaking that this would be a very expensive method, especially as applied to roads boards. Roads-board members in rural districts are nearly all big land-holders; the valuers are really their servants; and we are asking these servants to place a value on the lands of their masters, in order that these lands may be taxed by the Government. Now what would be the natural tendency of a valuer? He would be something more than human if he did not desire not to see the Government drop too heavily on his employers. We find now that in some cases roads boards strike high rates in order to show how heavily they are taxing themselves, but in order to escape too high an impost they make very low valuations; and therefore we find that the rate in a roads board district is not a clue to the extent to which the rate-payers are taxed. A few years ago we found, even in the city of Perth—I do not say it is so now—that the values were very low and the rates very high. And one of the reasons for this anomaly was that the Metropolitan Waterworks Board used the valuations made by the city council; consequently the higher the city values, the higher the contribution of the citizens of Perth to the revenue of the board. Well, it did not matter to the citizens if they were paying 2s. in the pound, we will say, on an annual value of £30, instead of 1s. in the pound on an annual value of £60, to the municipality; but where the value was low and the rate high, the ratepayer contributed so much less to the waterworks board than he would have contributed had the conditions been reversed. And so I believe that for years valuations—well were not excessive I will put it that way—in the city of Perth; and at the present time, in a number of roads board districts valuations are not excessive; and members can rely upon it that they will not be increased if this Bill passes and the local valuers are made the assessors for the Government under the provisions of the Bill. The Premier's proposal is absolutely impracticable.

THE PREMIER: I indicated that some boards adopted that rough-and-ready method, and that others had valuations made by proper valuers, whose valuations varied in some instances from £10 to 3s. 6d. per acre. The Government will have discretion to utilise the values when they are fair and equitable, and when they are ridiculous to leave them alone.

MR. DAGLISH: The Government will have to pay for its experience; and if it deals with a few districts only where unduly low valuations are made, it will be paying somewhat more dearly for its experience than it would be if it employed its own officers straight away to deal with all the districts. But beyond question the simpler and the cheaper plan is to make the owner state his own valuation.

THE PREMIER: That is, provided there is no compulsory purchase provision.

MR. DAGLISH: But the principle of self-valuation is no good unless it be accompanied by some penalty for a misleading valuation. Undoubtedly the owner, if asked to value his own property, will not value it a halfpenny over the price at which he would wish to sell. Probably in some cases he will value about 50 per cent. below that figure. But if there should be, as there is in New Zealand, the contingent power to purchase compulsorily at the owner's valuation, that power makes the owner a very clever, capable, and reliable valuator in the great bulk of cases. The principle has worked well in New Zealand; and it is the cheapest form of valuation that we can have. If the Government have any suspicion, there is power to make a check assessment; but that power need not often be used; and perhaps after one or two repurchases were made it would not be needed at all. In any event, this very cheap system should be given a trial, because of the fact that it has proved efficient in the only part of Australasia in which it has been tried, that is in New Zealand, which I think has had about 13 years' experience of it. In connection with this Bill there are no other points on which I think it necessary to touch to-night; but I very earnestly hope that the Government will give due consideration to the question I raised at the outset—the necessity for making their taxa-

tion fall equitably on all sections of the community; and they can do that only by applying the same principles of taxation to incomes as are in this Bill applied to land values.

On motion by **MR. LAYMAN**, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at three minutes to 10 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 21st August, 1906.

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Money-Lenders (Mr. Moss), 2s. passed	1136

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. H. Briggs) took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **COLONIAL SECRETARY**: 1, First Annual Report of the Public Service Commissioner for the fourteen months ended 30th June, 1906. 2, Fourth Annual Report of the proceedings of the Registrar of Friendly Societies in connection with Trade Unions. 3, Mining Development Act, 1902—Return of Expenditure for year ended 30th June, 1906. 4, Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1902—New Rule No. 56. 5, Goldfields Water Supply Administration—Annual Report for year ended 30th June, 1906. 6, Public Works Department—Specification for the Katanning-Kojonup Railway. 7, Copy of Agreement between the Honourable Walter Kingsmill, Colonial