

raising of the age to seventeen, and I propose to maintain that attitude.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	6

Majority for	..	5
--------------	----	---

AYES.

Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. H. J. Saunders
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. H. Millington	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. P. Allen	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. H. Carson
Hon. J. Duffell	(Teller.)
Hon. R. J. Lynn	

Amendment thus passed.

The CHAIRMAN: There is a consequential amendment in this clause.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I move a further amendment—

That proposed Subsection (3) be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—
“A prosecution under this section must be begun within three months after the offence has been committed.”

Here again my object is to restore the original provision, and to defeat an amendment brought in and passed by stealthy methods.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not quite in order in reflecting on the conduct of the Chamber.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: There was no division, the amendment being merely put and carried on the voices. No one, except members actually in the Chamber, knew that it was coming forward. The Colonial Secretary's contention, I understand, was that frequently young girls get into trouble and that their people do not find it out until five or six months have elapsed, thus rendering the period of three months for bringing a prosecution useless. I do not think such cases can occur frequently, and I do think it unwise to keep a term of six months hanging over the man's head in view of the possibility of blackmail being levied. In such cases as the Colonial Secretary referred to, there is the remedy of making the man pay afterwards. Three months is quite long enough.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think Sir Edward Wittenoom is entitled to blame anybody, unless it is himself, for the manner in which this provision was carried here. A petition was presented, and was read, and consideration of the petition was deferred until this proposed new section was reached in Committee.

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

Clause 8—Substitution of new section for Section 189:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: After the last division, I take it the amendment of para-

graph (i) Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 189 follows almost as a consequential amendment. I move an amendment:—

That in proposed new Section 189, Subsection (1), paragraph (i), the word “sixteen” be struck out, and “seventeen” inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move a further amendment—

That in proposed new Section 189, Subsection (1), paragraph (iii), after the word “guardian” there be inserted “employer.”

Mr. Kirwan previously gave notice of this amendment, which, however, became meaningless when the age of protection was raised to seventeen years. Now it is again necessary.

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

Clause 9—Amendment of Section 190:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I again move an amendment similar to one of which which Mr. Kirwan previously gave notice—

That in line 2, between the words “by” and “the,” there be inserted “inserting the word ‘employer’ after the word ‘guardian’ in line 1, and by.”

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

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill again reported with further amendments.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [6.18]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.19 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 19th November, 1918.

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

[For “Questions on Notice” and “Papers Presented” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

QUESTION—KAISER'S ABDICATION.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been called to the paragraph appearing in the “West Australian” of the 11th and 12th instant headed “The Kaiser's Abdication, Enthusiastic scenes on the Goldfields”? 2, Seeing that one

of the principal constituencies is represented by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green), who is a supporter of the policy of peace by negotiation, will he take steps to prevent such re-joining at such centre, in order not to hurt the feelings of that hon. gentleman?

The PREMIER replied: I must ask the hon. member to give notice of this question.

QUESTION—"ULYSSES" STRANDING INQUIRIES.

Hon. T. WALKER (without notice) asked the Honorary Minister: Have any messages at all come from Melbourne in reference to the papers regarding the stranding of the "Ulysses"? It is some time since the House decreed that these should be placed on the Table of the House and nothing further has been heard of them.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister) replied: No, we have not received any word yet. I will ask the Premier to-morrow to telegraph again to the authorities concerned.

QUESTION—FRENCH MISSION.

Mr. DUFF (without notice) asked the Premier: Has any provision been made for the accommodation of members of Parliament on the platform of the central railway station, or wherever the public welcome to the French Mission takes place?

The PREMIER replied: I desire to make an announcement to the House which I think will answer the hon. member's question. As members realise, we have been working at high pressure during the last few days. I wish to inform hon. members that the Government desire that they shall join them to-morrow at luncheon at Parliament House to meet the members of the French Mission. I thought that if invitations were sent out they might not reach their destination in time, and therefore take this means of letting members know. I have also made arrangements that members' railway passes will not only give them admission to the railway station platform, but also to the enclosure, which is provided there for the reception of the French Mission. There are no other public functions with which the Government are connected so far as the French Mission is concerned, except in connection with escorting the members of this Mission through some of the timber and agricultural areas of the State.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1918-19.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 7th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Public Works Department, Hon. W. J. George, Minister.

Vote—Public Works, £110,000:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [4.45]: I do not know that it is necessary to make a long speech in connection with these matters. I shall be able to afford hon. members any information they may require when the items

are being dealt with. The total amount voted last year under the heading of Revenue, Loan and Property Trust was £600,000. The total expenditure was £489,000, leaving a balance of £111,000 unexpended. The Estimates were passed so late last year that a lot of the work, which would have been put in hand but for that fact, could not be finished during the period of the financial year. With regard to the salaries, if hon. members will turn to the Estimates they will see that there has been an amalgamation between the Public Works Department and the Water Supply Department. It was decided by the Government that as from the 1st March of this year the goldfields, the agricultural, and the town water supply branches should be severed from the metropolitan water supply and transferred to the Public Works Department. The reasons for that change were made pretty clear last session, but for the benefit of hon. members who may not have been present I would like to say that it has always been held by the different Governments that sooner or later the metropolitan water supply should either be transferred to the local authorities as being a portion of the utilities they should deal with or should be transferred to a special board, just as was the case some years ago, and in that way taken out of Government control. It was considered that the undertaking was sufficiently large to have a special staff and a special board to deal with it, a board which should be continuous. It is recognised by authorities throughout the world that matters of this kind resolve themselves into questions apart entirely from politics, and that the control should be by a continuous board, so that there might be a continuous policy, in which way only is it possible to give the best services to the people at the lowest cost. The branches I have quoted were transferred to the Works Department and the Under Secretary of the Works Department, Mr. Munt, was appointed the permanent head. The previous Under Secretary for Water Supply was transferred to the Agricultural Department as acting under secretary. I might also tell hon. members that although the arrangement started as from the 1st March it was not until the beginning of April that the goldfields and agricultural water supply staffs were transferred to the barracks, and from that date the Engineer-in-Chief assumed control of the professional work. Hon. members will remember that the question of economy and concentration in connection with the office staffs was debated in the House for some time. It was a step advocated by the Treasurer and myself that the accounts branches of the State should some day be gathered together in one large building, and we commenced on the accounts branches of the Public Works and the Goldfields and Agricultural Areas Water Supply Departments. These branches are housed in the building at the corner of Hay and George-streets, and we have also provided accommodation there for the State Sawmills Department. Prior to the amalgamation to which I have referred there were

39 officers engaged in the accounts branch of the Public Works Department, and there were 12 in the branches of the Water Supply Department mentioned. Now we have a total of 26 officers and they are doing the whole of the work as satisfactorily and more promptly than it was done before. We say this with a certain amount of pride, because it is one of the little things which we had in view as an illustration or an argument or proof that by effecting an amalgamation of the accounts of the State and bringing them into one building, we would eventually save the State tens of thousands of pounds annually. There will be a saving not only in regard to salaries, but in regard to book-keeping entries passing from one department to another, and we hope eventually to model them on the pattern of the Railway Clearing House in Great Britain, which deals with all the railways of England. Whether this will come in our time or not it is impossible for me to say, but we are hopeful that it will be possible to bring it about, and every step should be taken to see that that end is achieved. A survey and inquiries have been made in connection with every office which is used by the public service, and we are hopeful that with a little bit of scheming, and a great amount of patience and strong will, it will be possible to house all the Government servants at present spread over different parts of the metropolis in buildings at the Treasury. It may take some little time to do this. It is one of those things which cannot be done in a moment because every step taken must be a complete step. A scheme has to be worked out, and we hope during recess, if we ever get into it, to be able to devote some time to bringing that about. If we do there will be several thousand pounds saved annually in rents which are at present paid for offices outside.

Mr. Foley: Will that include the purchase of the present Town Hall site?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; we believe we can do what we desire in the buildings which we have, those buildings which stretch from the old Police Court around to the Lands Department. We expect to be able to do this by carefully rearranging the offices and grouping them where we can. At any rate, we propose to try to do that. Dealing with the amalgamation of the Works and Water Supply Departments, it has been necessary to show under the heading of Minister for Works, salaries not only of those officers exclusively engaged in connection with public works, but also the officers engaged in connection with the two Water Supply branches that I have mentioned. Hon. members will find on reference to the Estimates that the amalgamated salaries total £49,903 as compared with £38,000 representing the Works Department salaries of last year, and whereas last year there were 124 officers provided for in the Public Works Department, provision has been made this year for the amalgamated departments for 158. These include the officers of the Water Supply branches who have been transferred. Last year the salaries of

the 124 officers totalled £38,973. The salaries of the officers we transferred from the Water Supply Departments total nearly £16,000, so that the two figures I have mentioned give a total of £55,000, as against £49,903 last year. These figures are given as the figures of the 1st July last. Since then there has been an effort made to further reduce the staff without impairing its efficiency, and unless we have larger works to undertake we shall still have to further reduce the staff whenever the opportunity comes about. Hon. members will find footnotes to the Estimates which give explanations as to certain items. The number of officers employed on the 1st July, 1917, in the Public Works Department and Water Supply Department undertakings was 415 and provision has been made this year for 316, a reduction of 99. Allowing for 12 officers who were transferred to the Stores Department and who are still engaged in connection with water supply business, the actual number employed in July last was 328 as compared with 415 12 months ago. I do not want it to appear as if we were trying to make capital out of the fact that we have brought about a reduction. It is a matter of regret that the affairs of the State have been such that we have not been able to find full employment for all those officers, but with the employment we have we are able to do all the work with 328 men. I hope, however, it will not be long before the work will necessitate our making additions to the staff. Hon. members will see that the salaries this year total £49,903. That sum, required for the Public Works, goldfields and agricultural, etc., has been allocated as follows:—To loan, £21,572, to the vote for subsidies to roads boards, £528; to the goldfields water supply undertakings, £12,750, to other hydraulic undertakings, £5,063, thus leaving a net vote chargeable on account of public works being carried out from revenue funds of £10,000 as compared with £8,973 expended last year. The reason for the increased vote is that the cost of preparing plans, supervision, including travelling expenses, etc., in connection with Commonwealth works and the erection of wheat sheds, is, in the first instance charged to the revenue vote for "salaries" and the revenue vote for "incidentals," and when the commission is received from the Commonwealth and the wheat sheds it is credited to consolidated revenue. I would also draw attention to the various items that appear on the Estimates. The total is £118,000, including salaries. Of that sum the Treasurer has only allowed me to have £100,000. Consequently the various items that appear on the Estimates must not necessarily be taken as if they were going to be carried out. It will all depend on how we get on for money. We have generally found, on account of the late period at which the Estimates have been passed, that we have not been able to put all these works in hand. Any of the works which may be left over, and which are considered to be essential, become a first

charge on the following year's Estimates. With regard to rents, there is an increase of £975. The Public Works Department pay from this vote all rents other than those incurred by railways, saving banks, Agricultural Bank and accommodation in the A.M.P. buildings for the Industries Assistance Board. The increase this year is due to the fact that this vote is being debited with £842 due to the Savings Bank, being interest on the amount expended on the offices now occupied by the Taxation Department, but which were for some years occupied by the metropolitan water supply. The Metropolitan Water Supply in its turn now makes provision for payment of the rent of the offices occupied by them in James-street. Under the heading of "incidentals" provision is made for allowances, railway fares, etc., incurred by officers while supervising Commonwealth works and the construction of wheat sheds. The amount so expended last year was between £500 and £600 and the £2,600 voted this year includes about £500 on that account again. This will be recovered on a commission basis and credited to revenue. Provision has again been made for subsidies to roads boards to the extent of £26,000, that being, approximately, the amount boards have earned by way of subsidy on the reduced scale, namely, half the pre-war subsidy. In connection with these subsidies we had a searching examination made into the way they have been carrying on their business, and we found there were many instances where the roads boards could help themselves very much more than they had been doing. I will ask hon. members to pay a little attention to the figures I am going to give. Under the Roads Board Act, on the unimproved capital value, a roads board declares a rate varying from 3d. to 2d. in the pound. There are 48 boards that can declare a rate from 2d. to 3d., while the other 75 roads boards can declare a rate varying from 1½d. to 1d. There are 35 that declared only one penny, eight that declared 1½d., and 30 that declared 1½d. It has been suggested that their valuations may be high. That point is being inquired into. We are quite of opinion that a number of them should be amalgamated. We have an instance of one board whose total revenue is only a little over £200. When the salary of the secretary and the office expenses have been paid, there remains only £14 or £15 with which to carry out the work. We say that the existence of such a roads board is not justified, that it is merely an employment bureau to provide someone with a billet. We are calling upon roads boards that may with advantage be amalgamated, to amalgamate, and the auditors have been instructed that when they see where two or more districts should be amalgamated, or a portion of one should be transferred to another, they are to so report to the roads board officer in the Works Department. We then go into it and see what we can do; because we are convinced that, in these times, if we can show any public body how the work of that body can be

more thoroughly and economically carried out, it is up to us to do so.

Mr. Harrison: The roads board you refer to must be in some outback district.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I agree that it is an extreme case.

Mr. Harrison: If they are in a remote district they cannot well amalgamate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Apart from that special instance, I am convinced that we are on the right track in endeavouring to reduce the number of roads boards. Of course it does not mean that they shall have less subsidy.

Mr. Malcy: But it will make the supervision of their work all the harder.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We do not intend to do this in a tyrannical way. Any action of the sort is taken in quite a friendly way. There are times when we can assist these boards in any of several directions. For instance, I have been able to send down an engineer to advise them in regard to construction and lay out, and again, we want to let them have our road-making machine on three years' terms, if they will take it. It is a good machine. I come now to another question, of interest to the member for Claremont. For his information let me say that the construction of the Perth-Fremantle road cost £26,000. This was to have been allocated amongst the various local authorities concerned. It has been impossible to do this. The local authorities have deliberately neglected to repair that road, with the object of throwing the responsibility for its maintenance upon the Government. Two years ago, when I assumed office, I found that the road was going to pieces.

Mr. Duff: It is going to pieces again now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And it is likely to go still further.

Mr. Duff: Was there not an understanding?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, but the understanding, apparently, was not quite clear, and it has not been observed.

Mr. Duff: I hope you will see that your understanding is properly understood.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We could not get them to repair the road and consequently, as there were subsidies due to them, I stuck to the subsidies. This year there is very little subsidy to be obtained, and so we are asking the Committee to vote £1,350.

Mr. Harrison: Then it will not hurt them to lose it this year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, but in respect to the capital expenditure and the maintenance, the question is now being considered how best we can make those local bodies shoulder the burden which they ought to shoulder.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have not much chance.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly the hon. member has had some experience of that. Under the heading "Hours and Rivers," there are various sums for expenditure in the North-West, as regards the settlements at Broome and Derby.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Have you had any fires up there this year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. For jetty repairs at Point Sampson £2,000 is set down. Those repairs are necessitated by ordinary wear and tear. For repairs at Port Hedland, the sum of £3,000 is provided. It is not possible to start the work at present, for there is great difficulty in getting people to go up there to do any work. We have been wanting 30 men for Wyndham for the last six weeks, and we have managed to get three only. For repairs to Victoria Quay at Fremantle, £11,000 is provided. The sum of £4,600 was expended last year and this new item will bring the total up to the £15,000 required. The under-structure has gone to pieces, and it cannot be allowed to go any further. At one time some of the Treasurers agreed that these harbour repairs at Fremantle should be set aside under the suspense account, but two years ago we had a big debate in the House and, in consequence, that system was not further pursued. In regard to the expenditure on repairs to buildings, let me say that the bulk of the money shown is for maintenance. If necessary repairs were to be effected to the buildings belonging to the State, over £100,000 would be required. Quite a number of buildings have never had a touch of paint upon them for 12 or 15 years. One instance is the Albany school house, which has a shingle roof. For years past the shingles have been coming off that roof, until at last it is absolutely necessary that something should be done. The roofs of some of the buildings that were erected 25 years ago have perished and gone. Whatever else may be allowed to stand over, it seems to me silly for the Government to allow expensive buildings to go to the devil for want of repairs. The revenue received by the Works Department last year amounted to £21,388, including commission from the Commonwealth £3,000, from the Wheat Scheme £2,300, rents other than lands £9,917, and sundries £4,350. We expect this year to get a similar sum. Possibly we shall receive £4,000 from the Commonwealth, £3,000 from the Wheat Scheme, and perhaps £10,000 from rents. I do not know that there are any other matters which I need touch upon just now. I should like hon. members to understand that the State is receiving loyal co-operation from the officers of the Public Works Department. Although it was found necessary to reduce the staff, those left are cheerfully carrying out the extra work thrown upon them. It is not pleasing to reduce staffs at any time, but I must say there has been very little grumbling indulged in among officers at the Works Department. The members of the staff have seen that the State is hard up, and that the work in which they were previously engaged is no longer there. I am pleased to say that several of the officials who went off to the Eastern States found employment there at higher rates than they received here. Also, I have heard from those who employed them that they have proved to be really good men. With these few remarks I commit the Estimates to the consideration of the Committee.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.11]: We are becoming accustomed

to the condition of having no money for the carrying out of public works. It is usual that every other department shall be served first and, if there be anything left over, it can go to the Public Works Department. The Public Works Estimates before us differ from the form we are accustomed to, for we have mixed up in them Estimates properly belonging to the Water Supply Department. Hon. members will notice that several officers who were previously paid under the Water Supply Estimates are now included among the officers of the Works Department, yet when we turn to the Estimates of the Water Supply Department we find deductions made only in regard to officers paid from the Public Works Vote. We have some difficulty in ascertaining from these Estimates whether or not there has been any great saving outside of the stoppage of loan works. If we take the amalgamation of the Water Supply Department with the Works Department, we find it has resulted in an increase of officers.

The Minister for Works: No.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, the Water Supply Department shows a decrease in the number of officers by 21, but the Works Department Estimates show an increase of 24, so really we have an increase of three officers as the result of the amalgamation. How, then, is it possible for us to determine whether or not any saving has been effected? While the Minister declares that a large amount has been saved by the retirement of some officers, we find that almost exclusively the whole of the saving has been brought about by the stoppage of works constructed out of loan moneys.

The Minister for Works: I do not agree with that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Without wishing to be egotistical, I may say that, when at the department, I cut down things so much that the present Minister found it almost impossible to make further reductions.

The Minister for Works: Oh no.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: For some time past the Works Department has suffered owing to the fact that there has been no money available for public works. The Minister referred to the work done by the department for the Wheat Scheme. I maintain that five per cent. is too high for the erection of wheat sheds. As the Minister has told us, it cost the Wheat Scheme last year £2,300 for the supervision of the construction of these sheds. There is scarcely a member of this Chamber who could not draw a plan sufficient for the building of the sheds in which the wheat has been housed this year. No special ability is required to design plans for such sheds, and there is the further consideration that one plan does for all the sheds. The plan consists of only a few straight lines: it is not a question of architectural beauty. The matter of drainage, also, is one of very little complexity. Yet as regards architectural plans the farmers have been called upon to pay the same rate for skeleton sheds as would be charged for one of the most expensive buildings in the city of Perth.

The Minister for Works: Do you know there are more plans connected with the work of erecting those sheds?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The fact of the matter is that any carpenter employed to put up those sheds and told by the Wheat Scheme exactly what was wanted could have done the work without any plans whatever. In my opinion, five per cent. is far too much to charge for supervision.

The Minister for Works: But we had to get the sites and prepare them, and fix up everything, and obtain all the material.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Five per cent. has been paid for supervising the erection. Very little supervision was necessary once the job was in the hands of the contractor. The work was perfectly plain and simple, and the contractor could hardly do otherwise than carry it out in a proper manner. When we come to the Railway estimates we shall find that a charge of ten per cent. has been made for putting in sidings. But these sheds are only temporary jobs intended to last but a short time. Whether the supervision was close or not, I do not know; but one man could have supervised the erection of all the sheds. Moreover, the sheds were erected within a period of three months. Yet the Wheat Scheme were charged £2,300 for plans and supervision. Otherwise, there is not much in these Estimates to complain about. I have looked through them carefully, and I do not think they contain anything but what the Minister is compelled to do. As the Minister has said, we have been trying for years to cut down the expenditure on public buildings. However, these works are put forward by the various departments, and the Minister has to do the best he can to get them passed. Let me say that I believe he has a good set of officers, who will do their utmost to carry out the work to his satisfaction. My only regret is that these Estimates do not contain items for certain works which are highly necessary. The Minister referred to the Fremantle wharf. The work to be done there is, I believe, super-structure of the sheds. Previously a sum of nearly £100,000 was spent on the wharves—a very large amount to take out of one year's revenue; and accordingly the amount was placed to a suspense account, and drawn on year by year. I regret the Minister is not able to do more but the money is not available.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.25]: I desire to endorse what the last speaker has said with regard to the erection of grain sheds. Undoubtedly the plans are plain, and quite free from intricacy; and the specifications are all straightforward. There is very little in the way of calculation as to dimensions of timber to carry certain weights. To charge for these plans the same rate as an architect would charge for the plans of a complicated building is not a fair proposition to the wheat growers of the State, who have to meet the charge. Another matter I desire to bring to the Minister's attention is this: He stated that the Government were taking up certain works on behalf of public bodies, such as roads boards, in the way of road formation.

He further stated that the Government were assisting local governing bodies with machinery and supervision, and also by the actual carrying out of works. Now, I know not of one instance but of several, where the Public Works Department have carried out such works on the same lines as they would have adopted had they been constructing a macadamised road in the centre of a town. I contend that with the same capital expenditure they could have done far more valuable work for the country districts by proceeding on less stringent lines. I know where high crowns have been put in, with specifications for large quantities of gravel on the top. The latter stipulation has in some instances not been carried out, for lack of supervision. I suggest that the Public Works Department officers should take into consideration the quality of the soil in the country districts, and the natural formation and then simply make a channel so that the water will not stand, and then, according to the nature of the soil, which is determined by the indigenous timber, place gravel on top if necessary. By this method much better results could be obtained from the same capital expenditure. The officers should not proceed on pre-determined plans drawn up here in the Barracks. In the Kellerberrin roads board district, I know, there has been money wasted; and the same thing can be said of other districts, and more particularly of Westonia, where the first expenditure of £200 in this connection was absolutely wasted. There was a narrow formation on a very high crown, and the water was not carried away; consequently the traffic had to concentrate on one section only, and that section was badly cut up. The soils in the country districts vary very much within short distances. Let me repeat that the Public Works officers should not set out to construct roads in country districts as if they were making St. George's Terrace.

Mr. TEESDALE (Rockbourne) [5.28]: Having regard to the reference made by the Minister for Works to possible reduction of some items, I would ask him to be as generous as possible in connection with the jetties of the North-West. I do not make a general application, but there are some jetties of which I have knowledge that they are in a bad state. I think the Minister will agree with me that the demolition of these jetties, once it starts, is very rapid, and that it is really better policy to attend to them as promptly as possible in order to obviate much heavier expenditure in the near future. The taredo is now so very effective in the North-West that in practically no time it goes through the pile once the sheeting is off. There is one item which strikes me as rather strange—that of £400 for the lighting and maintenance of the Perth Causeway. I was under the impression that the Causeway was now under Greater Perth.

The CHAIRMAN: Items will be discussed when we come to them. We are now discussing only the main policy of public works.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [5.29]: The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) has referred to the charges of the Public Works Department in connection with the grain sheds. I now desire to make a

statement which does not pertain immediately to the Minister for Works but rather to the Minister for Agriculture. The matter is one of extreme urgency. Last week the Press published an announcement that the shipping board in Melbourne intended to divert to Fremantle tonnage for not less than 500,000 bags of wheat for transport to Mediterranean ports. Representations have been made to the Premier by the Geraldton town council regarding the possibility of diverting some of that tonnage to Geraldton, to lift there at least a couple of hundred thousand bags. Now, here is the main point of my suggestion: It has reference to the sheds. The policy of the Wheat Scheme to-day is, after filling one shed at Geraldton, which was not used last year, to rail all the wheat in the Geraldton district either to Goomalling or to Spencer's Brook.

The CHAIRMAN: The erection of sheds and the raling of wheat have no connection with each other.

Mr. MALEY: But there is no other item on the whole of the Estimates under which I can bring this matter forward. My only other opportunity would be in connection with wheat marketing legislation, and the subject is one of extreme urgency.

The CHAIRMAN: Would not the hon. member achieve his object in moving a motion in the House?

Mr. MALEY: It is too late for a private member now. If the Government would accede to the request of the Geraldton council and divert the 200,000 bags of wheat in one of the sheds, the Wheat Marketing Scheme will have an opportunity of using both the sheds for the present season's wheat, which will obviate the necessity of removing the wheat to sheds in the southern part of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That wheat does not belong to the British Government.

Mr. BROWN (Beverley) [5.32]: I support the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) in regard to the amount paid for the supervision and construction of sheds, and the amount paid to the Government for putting in the sidings. I think it is 10 per cent., which is exceedingly high, and should be reduced. Unfortunately, it is impossible now because, after this year, it may not be necessary to construct sheds because shipping may be available. As to the roads boards, the Minister for Works said, in regard to rates struck by roads boards, that they were not high enough. Most roads boards are very strict and rate according to the amount of money required to construct the roads. I think the Minister will agree with me that the roads, generally speaking, are in a very fair condition in most districts. In days gone by the roads boards used to receive from the Works Department an amount of money in accordance with the rates struck, but so far as the boards in my district are concerned, the valuation is exceedingly high. The rate struck by the Beverley roads board returns £3,000. The members of that board are very attentive to their duties, and I may say that the money which they receive from the Government is expended in a very careful manner. If it were

not for the taxes imposed by the Federal and State Governments, and other rates, the roads board could impose a heavier burden of taxation on the people and there would then be more money to expend in the making of roads; but we are limited now in imposing rates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [5.34]: In regard to the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), I may say, in reference to the amalgamation of departments, that when the Water Supply and Works Departments were amalgamated we had to marry the staffs as much as we could. Instead of having two staff we had to mix the men so that the work would be done cheaper. On the 1st July, 1917, the Works Department had 178 officers, 124 being permanent and 54 temporary, and on the 1st July, 1918, there were 114 permanent officers as against 124 in the previous year, and 30 temporary as against 54. As far as the Water Supply Department is concerned, on the 1st July, 1917, there were 235 officers employed in all departments. On the 1st July, 1918, there were 185, or a decrease of 50. One reason why there is not as big a difference appearing on the Estimates is that a lot of officers were retired and had to be compensated according to the Public Service Act. A proportion of these have had to be provided for. As to the Wheat Scheme, and the remarks that the five per cent. is too high, members are under a wrong impression. We not only had to draw out the plans of the wheat sheds, but in addition to that the Public Works Department had to get the sites. They had to resume lands and the sites had to be levelled, and the department had to be responsible for all the material being on the spot in proper time. The work was sprung on the department, and if the Public Works department made £100 above expenses, it is as much as they did. I have put in many full days of my time in attending to this work alone, so as to get the work through. The work was not being done by day labour, and therefore if we had kept the contractor waiting we would have had to pay him damages, and I may tell members that the department has not had to pay one penny for damages. I offered to turn over to the Wheat Scheme the Public Works staff so that the Scheme might do the job themselves, but they would not undertake it. We were not out to make a profit and I think they got a cheap job. The member for Avon spoke about better work being done than was necessary in the Kellerberrin district. Of course the hon. member has a right to his opinion, but we have to draw up specifications and to make them as simple as we can, but the work cannot be done without an engineer being sent along. We have to rely on him. It is necessary that officers should be sent into the districts. I had an application from one roads board for £800 to repair five roads as special flood damages, but when the matter was looked into it was discovered that not a penny had been expended on the roads, they had not even been cleared or made at all. In regard to what the member for Greenough said about the wheat sheds, from what I can understand from the Premier it is impossible

with the ships coming out, to obtain depth of water to enable full loads to be taken at Geraldton. The only way it can be managed is to take part of a load at Geraldton and then go to Fremantle and top up. At the present time, when ships are required to be got away as quickly as possible, it is the correct policy to load up at a port which will enable them to get away from Western Australia as soon as possible.

General debate concluded; votes and items discussed as follow:—

Vote—Public Works and Buildings:

Item, Under Secretary, £600.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think there is an increase of £50 here, but the item seems to be placed so as to deceive members. The item should be set out so that members need not turn up last year's Estimates to find out what the amount was voted in that year. I have said before that whenever an increase is set down for an officer, particularly a highly paid officer, it should be disclosed at a glance. How many now members would be aware by the information given that there is an increase of £50 for this officer this year? I raise my protest against the increases being scattered through the Estimates of officers receiving good salaries already, whilst we know a number of officers in the service, in what I may call the rank and file, receiving salaries between £200 and £400, have been on the same mark for the past generation and with no chance of getting an increase except the £12 provided for those under £250 a year. There is an increase for the under secretary of this department of £50 and for the Under Secretary for Agriculture an increase of £50.

The Premier: No. That was struck out.

The Minister for Works: There is no intention to deceive the House.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not clever. You are pretty clear in covering up these things.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Under Secretary for Water Supply had a salary of £650 a year. When the Water Supply Department was transferred to Works a £50 increase was given to the Under Secretary for Works and Mr. Trethowan was appointed Under Secretary for Agriculture at a salary of £600 a year. I regret that the figures are not more clearly given, but there was no intention to deceive.

Mr. SMITH: It is rather unfair that while we cannot increase the salary of the ordinary civil servant we can make increases to the heads of departments.

Item, Accountant, £360.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Does this officer draw any more salary than is set down in this item?

The Minister for Works: He does, under Trading Concerns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The accountant is shown as drawing £360 a year, whereas the fact is he is drawing an additional £120 in connection with the Implement Works. This fact should be shown in the Estimates, but it is not found anywhere. There is no footnote in connection with this item.

Mr. Smith: Cut it out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I feel inclined to move in that direction. If the Estimates are presented to us in this form, which is evidently intended to deceive hon. members, we ought to take matters into our own hands and cut out those items which we object to on this score. The maximum classified salary for an accountant is £432 in most of the departments, but this officer receives a total of £480. What is the explanation for this extra amount not being shown here?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If this item is struck out, we shall have to put on an officer at, say, £500 a year to look after these State trading concerns. Mr. Brodribb is an accountant, and has 26 officers under him. He also looks after the implement works, the brick works, and the quarries as business manager. If the Committee take the view that they do not want any officer to carry on more than one particular duty, let them say so. That means that we must put on an officer specially to deal with these matters. It was thought that as the accounts had to be kept in the offices of the Public Works Department, the officer who was in charge of them could also look after and direct the office work of these different trading concerns. That is why he is being paid an extra £120 a year. We have got as economical a way of dealing with these trading concerns as it is possible to get.

Mr. Smith: In my opinion we should have all the details such as were promised to us.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The best thing then is to throw out the Estimates and let us bring them in again.

Mr. Smith: We would like to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is no use playing with the matter. If hon. members think they are being misled, there is only one course for them to adopt, and that is to throw out the item and the whole Estimates.

Mr. Smith: The statements here are misleading.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know all the details of the Estimates of this department. I cannot be expected to. I understood that the whole of these Estimates were prepared in a way to carry out the wishes of the Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. P. Collier: They do not do so.

Hon. T. WALKER: No one objects to paying a fair salary for work done. Neither is there any valid objection to amalgamating the work in some directions. The leader of the Opposition asks how it is the Committee have not been supplied with the fullest information which will enable them to come to a sound decision. Had it not been for the question asked by him, the Estimates would have indicated that this amount was all this particular officer received, and that he had no other work. Why have the Committee been misled? We should know what each officer is getting.

The Minister for Works: I agree that hon. members should know that.

Hon. T. WALKER: Our complaint is that we were not informed on these points. The Minister for Works has not answered the question raised by the leader of the Opposition. He says that he believes that these Es-

timates are in compliance with the instructions given by the Colonial Treasurer. This is a serious charge to make against that Minister. If these Estimates conceal any of the facts, or do not reveal them as they are presented to us in this form, because the Colonial Treasurer has given instructions for them to be put in that form, it is a serious charge to lay against him. The whole of the Estimates ought to be withdrawn and amended so that we shall have every detail that is required for a clear judgment in dealing with them.

Mr. ANGELO: We are indebted to the leader of the Opposition for drawing attention to the unsatisfactory manner in which this item, and the other to which he referred, have been placed before us. I do not think the Minister has replied satisfactorily. He has camouflaged the issue by telling us of the valuable work which this officer is doing. All civil servants should be asked to do a fair day's work. If they have not sufficient work in their own position to enable them to take on other work, they are not doing a fair day's work where they are. If they are asked to take on other positions, and in carrying out these other positions are going to work overtime, they should not be asked to accept such positions.

Mr. MULLANY: I agree with the leader of the Opposition that the item should be shown more clearly. The Minister has adopted a wrong attitude when he says that if we are not satisfied with it, we can strike the item out. The leader of the Opposition put the position clearly, logically and temperately and he had a perfect right to ask for this information. We should be failing in our duty if we did not take full opportunity of getting a clear explanation on every item in these Estimates.

The Minister for Works: No one denies that.

Mr. MULLANY: The Minister's attitude just now has made it appear that he did desire to hide something, and that if the Committee did not feel pleased they could take extreme action. I anticipate that the Minister has some explanation which will satisfy the Committee.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no desire at all to hide anything from hon. members. They can have all the information in my possession. I am annoyed myself that a footnote should not appear there.

Mr. Angelo: Why did you not say so before?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I thought I had done so. I shall want to know why it has been left out. The omission was not due to any thought of deceiving the Committee. I have not the information with regard to every officer in the department. If hon. members wanted to have that they would require to have the Estimate presented in the way they were presented 30 years ago, when every officer employed by the Government had an item. It was generally recognised when all those items were given in that way that they would have the effect of not only prolonging the debate, but that it would also lead to members

of the service, who considered they were not being fairly dealt with, approaching members of Parliament to bring the matter before the House. Of course if members are of opinion that every civil servant who receives more than what might be his classified salary for the extra work he does, should have his item appearing separately, the only plan will be to have the Estimates compiled in a fuller form than we have done this year. With regard to Mr. Brodribb, he is the accountant for the Works Department, and he has the three branches of the water supply under his care, while he also controls the accounts of the implement works, the brickworks, and the Boya quarry. If hon. members consider that the principle of one man one job should be carried out, it will mean adding considerably to the civil service and adding to the expense of the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister has spoken on everything except the point which was raised. We do not expect to have every item regarding every officer appearing in the Estimates, but we do not want everything covered up. The item we are dealing with now stands alone. There is no footnote to it, and I say that that was not an accident. It was done deliberately. The Minister, in the notes which are supplied to him by the department, has the information which shows that this officer draws £120 from somewhere else. If that information was available for the Minister it should also have been supplied as a footnote to the Estimates. When we come to the item under State implement works, I intend to move for a reduction of it. Item, Salaries and allowances generally, £14,543.

Mr. SMITH: The Minister for Works referred to the time when every item appeared on the Estimates and none were hunched. I think it would be better to revert to that system. At the present time we are considering the Estimates blindfold. Members should have an opportunity of discussing each item if they want to do so, and attention could then be drawn to injustices that were being done. A good many highly paid officials have received increases in their salaries, particularly when offices have been amalgamated. There is one exception, however, to which I would refer. The officer at present in charge of land resumption is in receipt of £360 per annum. He was appointed to do the work of the land resumption officer who was transferred to another department. The land resumption officer was in receipt of £500 per annum, and notwithstanding the fact that the officer who was appointed to do the work had the work of his own department to do as well, the Minister did not see fit to pay him a salary commensurate with the increase in the duties he had to carry out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the present Ministry have sinned, they have sinned in good company. The previous Ministry dealt with this officer in the way we have done and so also did the Ministry presided over by Mr. Scaddan. The officer in question, Mr. J. J. O'Neill, received a salary of £276, and while clerk in charge of the land resumption office was given an allowance of £84 a year.

which I understand is in accordance with the Public Service regulations. That brought his salary to £360, which of course was less than the previous occupant, Mr. Hall, received. Mr. Hall, I think, received £450 or £500. Mr. O'Neill received £360 from the Seaddan Government and it was not in the power of the Wilson Government or the Lefroy Government to increase the amount.

Mr. Smith: Do you think he is entitled to it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think he is a very able man and quite as able as the gentleman who occupied the position before. I would say this of Mr. O'Neill, that I have had a good few transactions with him and I am satisfied that he has the interests of the Government at heart in connection with everything he does, and it would please me very much to recognise his work by way of an increase in salary. Hon. members, however, must understand that since I have been Minister for Works, the Treasurer has put his foot down very strongly in connection with advances in salaries.

Mr. Smith: But this would not be an advance. The other man was getting £500 per annum.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: All I can say is that it is not in my power to give this increase to Mr. O'Neill. If I did, I would have to give increases to a number of other officers as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is there any officer included in this item drawing a high salary who has been given an increase? I understand that the sub-accountant has received an increase of £48. I am sorry that I have to give the House this information instead of the Minister.

The Minister for Works: Yes, that is quite true.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One officer included in this item is set down for an increase of £48 a year. Are there other officers included to whom it is intended to give an increase?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is referring to the sub-accountant, who was granted an increase of £48 a year in 1916, being a special allowance because of extra responsibility thrown on him while acting as sales manager, looking after trading concerns. The officer is graded low, and the recommendation for the increase came through the Public Service Commissioner.

Hon. P. Collier: Is he at the maximum of his classification?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think he is.

Hon. P. Collier: Are there any other increases?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister's clerk receives an allowance of £24 per annum, which is in accordance with the Public Service regulations. It is given to him in lieu of overtime.

Hon. P. Collier: The usual allowance is £48 per annum.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This officer is thoroughly reliable, and in addition to being Minister's clerk he has to keep the staff

records, which enables the department to do without another officer who was getting something over £200 a year. Mr. Tindale, the engineer, is receiving £408 a year, and receives an allowance of £124 annually as engineer for the North-West. The engineer in charge of the Bunbury harbour works receives a salary of £360 a year, which is most ridiculous for an engineer. He has an allowance of £48 a year. Under this officer the work is being done 30 to 35 per cent. cheaper than under any other officer previously. Another officer, H. Robinson, in charge of reticulation works at Wyndham, receives a salary of £408 and a special allowance of £100 while at Wyndham. That was agreed to before the present Government took office. I do not think the Committee will grumble at this officer's remuneration, seeing that carpenters in the North-West are paid 2s. 9d. an hour, while in Perth the rate is 1s. 9d.

Item, Maintenance Perth-Fremantle-road, £1,350.

Mr. DUFF: As so many persons outside roads boards and municipalities are interested in this work, will the Minister give the Committee some idea of how this money is to be repaid?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Perth-Fremantle-road was allowed to get into such disorder that it was absolutely dangerous for anyone to travel over. Its present condition is very much better compared with what it was previously. The Labour Government took this matter in hand and a busy-bee was formed to repair the road. The Government spent between £26,000 and £27,000 on the road. There were numerous conferences between the different bodies concerned—the Perth, Fremantle and Claremont municipalities—and the time of the House was taken up on this question. A select committee also went into the matter, but no agreement was arrived at. When I took the matter in hand the road was going to pieces, and the Government called on the various bodies interested to attend to it, but they did nothing. They had an idea that if they let the road go to pieces the Government would have to put it right. However, with the consent of Cabinet, the road was repaired. At that time the Government were giving subsidies to municipalities and road boards, and after a time a scheme was hit upon as to the division of the money. Instead of paying subsidies to the municipalities and roads boards the Government repaired the road, and handed the balance to the councils and roads boards. They objected strongly to this system. This year very little money was spent in subsidies to municipalities and roads boards, and therefore the road had to be kept in repair out of Consolidated Revenue. The sum of £1,350 on the Estimates will give the Committee an opportunity of saying what should be done, whether the road should be allowed to go into disrepair, or whether the Government should keep it in order. It is intended to see if there is any legal way of making the municipalities and roads boards pay for the upkeep of the road, plus interest on the money which the Government have expended. There is one portion of the road which, when the repairs were being

effected, could not be effectively repaired, as there was no tar to be obtained either in Perth or in the Eastern States. Therefore the road was made in the ordinary way. As soon as it is possible to get the material for this work the road will be put in proper repair.

Mr. LAMBERT: Touching on the upkeep of main roads, it is time the Government reviewed the position not only in connection with the road between Perth and Fremantle, but other roads in various parts of the State. The control of main roads is being dealt with in a promiscuous manner, and it might be as well to see if an amendment of the Municipalities Act could not be made, by which the main roads could be effectively kept in proper repair. This matter has had to be tackled in other States, and it should be dealt with here. There is the Boulder to Kalgoorlie main road, which is under three separate local bodies, and these three semi-political institutions have the colossal audacity to ask the Government to grant passes to members to come to Perth to sit as an economy conference to discuss how we should run this country, or how the finances should be controlled. Ever since these municipalities were brought into being they have been continually approaching the Government to keep this road in repair. That main road to-day, as it has been for many years past, is an absolute disgrace to any local authority. It is as bad as any portion of the Perth-Fremantle-road. The position is increasingly bad in regard to the control of main roads in this State. The question has had to be tackled in other countries, and the sooner the Government here tackle it the better. It is a disgrace to the Legislature that a lot of irresponsible, parochial bumbles should be in a position to allow important roads to get into a serious condition of disrepair.

Mr. ANGELO: As the result of travelling on the Perth-Fremantle-road recently I have come to the conclusion that a great deal of the damage is caused by heavy motor and other lorries, which I think should be taxed in proportion to the damage they do. If the Government are to be called upon to maintain that road, the Government should be entitled to collect the license fees paid by those lorries, which in fact are competing with our State railways. The municipalities which object to undertaking the maintenance of the road are to-day collecting the license fees.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is just what they are not doing.

The Minister for Works: We are providing for it in the Traffic Bill.

Mr. ANGELO: I am very glad to hear it.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Minister has practically told us that at a time when the roads board subsidies are cut down to vanishing point, when feeder roads cannot be provided for by the department, when only recently £26,000 has been spent on the Perth-Fremantle road, it is proposed to give £1,350 to the rich municipalities in the metropolitan area. For the first time in the history of the State no municipal subsidies are to be granted.

The Minister for Works: It was the same last year.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Last year a small sum of £2,871 was granted. This year, apparently, the municipalities in country districts are not to get one penny of subsidy. Yet the Government, having already expended £26,000 on the Perth-Fremantle-road, with a further expenditure last year of £1,298, propose this year to find £1,350 for the repair of that road. We should not in this way grant money to the rich municipalities between Perth and Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Narrogin ought to squeak!

Mr. JOHNSTON: Narrogin is getting no subsidy at all.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Succeeding Governments have spent nearly £300,000 in your district.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The time has arrived when the people of the metropolitan area ought to be able to maintain their own roads.

The Minister for Works: Some 45 per cent. of the traffic on that road comes from Perth.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Well, why not take the Perth motor fees? To test the feeling of the Committee as to whether the Government expenditure on the Perth-Fremantle-road should continue, I move—

That the item be struck out.
I hope before the House adjourns the Minister for Works will bring forward some concrete proposal to make these local authorities that agreed to repay the £26,000 spent on this road act up to their agreement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member referred to rich municipalities. So far as I know, there is only one rich municipality in the State, namely Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Munzie: It is the best financed municipality in the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is because they got heavy endowments in the early days and made good use of them. Local governing authorities in this State do more work than does Parliament. They are limited in their rating powers. The Government have wiped out their subsidies, and the local authorities can only strike a general rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound, whereas in years gone by they used to be subsidised up to 15s. and £1 per pound.

Mr. Brown: Are they not allowed to rate up to 2s. 6d.?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, only 1s. 6d. general rate. Under the present conditions it is impossible for municipalities to carry on as they would like to do. When the subsidies were removed the local authorities should have been given power to rate as high as necessary. As to the Perth-Fremantle-road, the whole of the difficulty would have been overcome if the Traffic Bill, which has been introduced on two or three occasions, had been passed, because that Bill proposed that the license fees should be used for the maintenance of the roads. Practically no license fees are collected in the municipalities adjoining the Perth-Fremantle-road. The fees all go to Perth or to Fremantle. The Traffic Bill would have corrected this. It was thrown out each time in consequence of the resistance from Perth. With their revenue restricted by Act of Parliament the local authorities find

themselves scarcely able to maintain their local roads in good order. It is true that it has cost £26,000 for repairs to this road. The Government made this road because of the pressure of public opinion, but they had no power to enforce payment. They were not able to have a rate struck so far as the local authorities were concerned. If the Minister brings in legislation to make it compulsory to pay, the local authorities have no money with which to pay, because another Act prevents them from raising the money. If the Minister brought in a Traffic Bill and appropriated all the license fees in this area, the money could be spent on the maintenance of the main road. It is a crying shame that heavy motors carrying up to ten tons should be allowed to go without paying any tax, and to use the main road in opposition to our railway system.

Mr. Duff: Some of them have metal wheels.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Quite so. The trouble in regard to this road is that it was blinded with lime dust before the tar was put on. This caused the tar to peel off in flakes, and I think this is why the top of the road is coming off between Cottesloe and Fremantle. This fact has been responsible for everlasting repairs being made to this road.

Mr. Johnston: Why not draw money from Midland Junction to Perth as well as from Perth to Fremantle?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Quite so. The Minister has already made arrangements for a portion of the Midland Junction road to be repaired by the Commonwealth. Until a proper Traffic Bill is brought in to provide for contributions for the upkeep of this road, it will be impossible for the local authorities to carry out the work.

Mr. HARRISON: I intend to support the motion for the deletion of this item. Those who use the main roads of the State should contribute towards their maintenance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is a sum of £26,000 set down for subsidies for roads boards.

Mr. HARRISON: In those places where Government works are in existence and the roads have to be used by vehicles employed in connection with those works, subsidies should be provided by the Government. In my electorate there are two such places. The money which the Government have should be applied in directions of that sort. I am prepared to assist the Government in the passage of a Traffic Bill. I am of opinion that the people who use the main roads in the metropolitan area in opposition to the railway system for the carriage of their goods should assist in the upkeep of the roads.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They will not pay and cannot be made to pay.

Mr. FOLEY: I intend to vote against the reduction of this item, although I do not think that municipalities are doing all they should do in keeping up these main roads. The opinion which members hold of municipalities is, I believe, held by municipalities in a more accentuated form of members of Parliament. It is said that if Parliament dealt with its business in the same way that

municipalities do it would be a good thing for the State, but I should say it would be a bad thing for this country if Parliament did so. I believe that a Traffic Bill will be introduced that will afford an opportunity of dealing with the main road question in some equitable form.

Mr. Maley: When?

Mr. FOLEY: I do not know. Those who criticise this item must remember that already an item has been passed giving the roads boards of the State a sum of £26,000 to do work of the same nature that it is intended shall be done under this particular item. If main roads are defined by law, and brought under proper control, through the local authorities, we shall reach some finality. In my opinion there has been bad construction in connection with this Perth-Fremantle road. In parts there is scarcely any bottom, and without good foundations it is impossible to make a road. If it could be arranged that from Fremantle to Claremont, from Claremont to Maylands, and from Maylands to Midland Junction there were three separate bodies working in unison, there would be a saving in the cost of administration, and the maintenance of the road would be much better looked after than it is at present. If the Minister is debarred from going on with this work by the deletion of the item, when we come to legislate in this matter we shall find that the whole road will have to be made over again. I know that various Governments have given to municipal bodies money for the upkeep of their main roads, but it has been put to other uses and never paid back. In my own electorate the local authority has robbed the Government time and again. Every other municipality of the State has at one time or another done the same thing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I disagree with that.

Mr. FOLEY: That is what I told the people at Leonora.

Mr. MALEY: The member for Leonora ask why country roads boards should squeal when they are getting £26,000, whilst the boards between Perth and Fremantle are only getting £1,350. I venture to say that the roads boards between Perth and Fremantle will also want their share of the £26,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Minister says they will not get it.

Mr. MALEY: He must give it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not if he does not wish to.

Mr. MALEY: I venture to say that if this extraordinary argument of the member for North-East Fremantle were valid, we would have heard a good deal more noise from the municipal economy conference. Has the Minister ever deprived any roads board between Perth and Fremantle of portion of a subsidy by reason of having granted larger subsidies elsewhere?

Mr. LAMBERT: I shall not support the amendment, because the road should not be permitted to fall into a state of disrepair. A Traffic Bill should be brought down to regulate the collection of carriage and license fees

and their expenditure. The same problem has had to be tackled in the Eastern States. The sooner the Government become seized of the necessity for an effective traffic Bill dealing with carriage and license fees, and also providing for the proper grouping of municipalities and road boards, the sooner shall we have economical administration of municipal affairs. I never before heard such arrant stupidity talked as that main roads compete with the railway system. Our business is to open up this country, if not by railways, then by high roads. Since we cannot like other countries have canals, we must provide other means of communication. The urgent need for dealing with the matter is emphasised in the history of practically every country. Many municipalities in this State are utterly useless and out of date, and should be abolished. I cannot vote for the amendment, but I hope the Government will accept the moving of the amendment as a direction to alter their present policy in this respect.

Amendment put and negatived.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Public Works Department.

Department of the Attorney General, Hon. R. T. Robinson, Minister.

Vote—Attorney General, £60,874:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [S.24]: Turning now to the Attorney General's department, I have a few figures which I think will be of value to hon. members in considering the Estimates of the department. The total estimated revenue for the present financial year is £78,535. Last year the revenue was estimated at £79,660, and out of that we realised £78,146. Towards the end of last year the Titles Office revenue was observed to increase slightly; and it is still increasing, and therefore we are justified in putting the revenue for the current year at a higher amount. In probate duty we estimated last year to receive £40,000, and we did receive £38,710. This, of course, is an item which it is impossible to gauge accurately. In judicial fines and fees the revenue estimated for this year is £21,000—a slight decrease on last year, where it will be seen to have amounted to £23,750. For the small item of Crown Law we anticipate a sum of £1,500. The amount is considerably cut down as from last year, when we received £2,750. The estimate is the same as last year's, but last year there were considerable sums which had been held up for very long periods in the Curator's department. Owing to the admirable select committee of this House which sat, we were able to bring those sums into revenue. However, we do not anticipate such accessions to the revenue this year. Sale of electoral rolls is estimated to produce £25. Last year we received £61, but there was then a general election, for which we are not looking this year.

Hon. T. Walker: Why should you not? The win-the-war cry is done.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Under Titles Office we have put down an estimated revenue of £16,000. Last year we received just £250 short of that amount; but towards the end of the year there was a revival of business, and it is now hoped that the estimate

will be exceeded. Turning to the items of expenditure in the Crown Law Department, hon. members will see, comparing year with year, that considerable fluctuations are observable. This is due largely to the fact that in the Crown Law Department is included the Electoral Department, and as hon. members know a general election comes only from time to time, and so alters the turn of the year. Moreover, in certain years there are more directions than in others. For the purpose of making a comparison of the expenditure in various years of the Crown Law Department exclusive of the Electoral Department, I have caused the figures for the Electoral Department for each year to be eliminated; and I now give a statement with those Electoral figures out. I also want to remark that during part of the period under review—I am comparing the figures from 1912-13 up to date—we have the State hotels in the Crown Law Department. In the course of this year the State hotels, too, have been eliminated from the Attorney General's Department, and are now administered, as hon. members know, by the Colonial Secretary's Department. In 1912-13 our estimate of expenditure was, in round figures, £71,000, and the actual expenditure £68,000. Now I propose to give the corresponding figures for the years 1913-14 up to 1917-18 in rotation, and hon. members will be good enough to observe how the Crown Law expenditure has decreased. In 1913-14 the expenditure was £68,026, in 1914-15 £66,319, in 1915-16 £65,249, in 1916-17 £59,471, and in 1917-18 £59,482; whilst the estimate for the current year is £58,869.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Is that for Crown Law only?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. I have excluded Electoral and State Hotels. Dealing with the department solely as Crown Law, I have shown that our expenditure has been decreasing gradually from the beginning of the war, the total decrease being some £9,000 per annum. I think those who control the department may justly take some pride in that reduction. These figures, for the reasons I have indicated, are not shown on the first page of these Estimates, which include the Electoral Department, while previous years included also the State Hotels. Extracting those two sets of figures, the position is as I have stated. The total for salaries shows a net increase of £322. I have complete details of those increases, and of the reasons for them, and at the proper time I will supply that information, though I may shortly state the reason for some of the increases and contrast the decreases. Under the heading of "Contingencies," a net decrease is shown in these Estimates of £9,045, but of that decrease £7,335 is on account of the Electoral Department. The remainder of the decrease, £1,700, is on the contingencies of the department. To put it in plain words, the contingencies of the department have been cut down by £1,700. Bearing in mind the fact already indicated that expenditure has been steadily decreasing in this department, for the last six years, I submit that reduction cannot well be exceeded if efficiency is to be maintained. In other words, I am advised by the Crown Law De-

partment—and after my own investigations I am of the same opinion—that the department cannot be run efficiently for one penny less than is being done at the present time. If I had my way I would like to see an addition made to the professional staff of the department.

Mr. Draper: You require it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have now in that department, excluding the Attorney General, only two professional men, the Solicitor General, Mr. Sayer, and the Crown Solicitor, Dr. Stow. There are some professional men in Perth carrying on the practice of barristers and solicitors who have four or five professional men in their establishments, and they probably do not get through as much legal work in the year as the Crown Law Department does. I hope, now that the war is over, it will be possible to secure the services of an additional professional officer. As is well known to hon. members, Mr. Sayer not only acts as general adviser to the Government, but he is the draftsman of most of the Bills. Dr. Stow drafts a certain number, but that gentleman's time is taken up from morning until night, and long after night, in the discharge of his duties. The member for Kanowna will also bear me out when I say that not a single night passes without the Solicitor General taking to his home a bag full of papers.

Hon. T. Walker: He has too much to do.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I hope in the course of the current year it will be possible to give that department some help by the appointment of another professional man. There used to be a third there, but since the war started we have endeavoured to carry on with only two. For the last year the incidentals totalled £6,500, and of that sum £5,500 was spent. The estimate this year is £4,500, or £2,000 less. The reduction is due to the change of policy in connection with printing, and the interchange of payments as between departments, which hon. members will recognise is a good scheme. This was inaugurated by the Treasurer. The department's estimates in days gone by have been both on the revenue and the expenditure side increased by debiting or crediting the inter-departmental charges. The Crown Law Department is the only department in the Government service that does not charge for its services.

Hon. T. Walker: Have you anything to show the services you render gratuitously to the Commonwealth?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have not been doing the Commonwealth work for the past twelve months. It would be impossible to give that information, because the work is so interwoven with the ordinary work of the department. The Commonwealth have absolute recourse to our courts. They can lay informations or issue writs, or take proceedings just as a private suitor may do. I can, however, answer the hon. member in respect to some cases. There have been cases where it was difficult to say who should pay, the Commonwealth or the State, but in those instances where the matters were purely of Commonwealth concern the Commonwealth footed the

bill. With regard to the prosecution recently of a man named McManus in connection with post office defalcations at Wyndham, the charge was laid under the State statute. The Commonwealth held that we should take proceedings, while I on the other had held that they should take proceedings. After a good deal of discussion it was agreed that the cost should be divided between the State and the Commonwealth. In purely Commonwealth cases, however, we have endeavoured, and have succeeded in getting the full amount from the Commonwealth, but it would be almost impossible to give the return the hon. member asks for. We are not now doing Commonwealth work; they have their own solicitors, but they have the use of our courts.

Hon. T. Walker: And our officers.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They do not use any officers of the Crown Law Department now.

Mr. Pilkington: They use our police.

Hon. T. Walker: And our magistrates and our courts.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They only use them as ordinary citizens of the State use them. At the last Treasurers' conference the Treasurer submitted a detailed statement which I had prepared giving all the particulars. This was used there, but with what success hon. members know as well as I do. I want to give one or two instances of decreases and increases which will probably save my answering a number of questions later on. The permanent salaries show a net decrease of £291. I have addressed myself to this subject as if I were an ordinary member wishing to interrogate the Attorney General to know what is the increased and what is the decreased amount, and what I am going to give is the result of a number of questions I asked myself. As against the decrease of £291, temporary salaries show an increase of £234. There is, therefore, a general net decrease. In the Electoral Department there is a small permanent increase of £48. As against that temporary clerical help in connection with the last election shows a decrease of £64, so that a total decrease still prevails. In the Titles Office there is a decrease on permanent salaries of £331, and there is also a small decrease in connection with temporary work. In stipendiary magistracy there is an increase of £251. As against that there is a decrease in connection with temporary magistracy of £263, so that even there there is a small saving. These temporary and permanent appointments in the Crown Law Department relate solely to officers being away at the Front and returning from the Front. In the Supreme Court there is an increase of £282 in the permanent staff, and £770 in the temporary staff. We have, therefore, in those two items alone, a total increase of £1,052. I will explain how that has been caused. If hon. members will turn to the list of judges' associates, they will see an increase of £157. Last year Mr. Justice Northmore did without an associate altogether, the reason being that he was doing Arbitration Court work for Mr. Justice Rooth, and therefore we were able to save the cost of one associate. Mr. Justice Rooth returned, and Mr. Justice Northmore, who was then entitled to

have an associate, asked for one. Provision has been made on the Estimates for an associate, but though it looks as though we were having an increased item of £157, that is not so. In the Official Receiver's Department an officer has been retired, and he received six months' leave before his retirement. That particular officer was employed in the Treasury, and so he cost us nothing, but we now have to pay £126 for that officer's retiring allowance. That will eventually be a saving, but it increases my Estimates for the moment. The great bulk of the increase relates to the work in the Probate and Curator's offices. Hon. members will know that we are administering the estates of soldiers killed in action free of cost. The work has considerably increased, and has necessitated the appointment of two extra officers, whose salaries, with those of others employed there, have increased the expenditure by £700. Hon. members may be aware of the fact that all estates under £500 can be filed on personal application, and the Act provides that our Supreme Court officers shall assist the executors and administrators in preparing their personal statements. It is found in practice that it is far simpler and takes less time for the officers to prepare those statements than to instruct others to prepare them. So that in connection with estates of under £500, the officers of the department are almost constantly employed in doing that work. Those items account for an expenditure of £900. The remainder is made up of the item "Cleaning police courts." This used to be done by the Works Department, and somebody considered that it ought to be a charge against the Crown Law Department. The Works Estimates have now been relieved of that payment, and the sum of £330, which was involved, finds a place on the Crown Law Estimates; on the total Estimates there is no increase. I have a great deal of further detailed information which I shall be glad to give to hon. members if they desire it when discussing the items. However, I think I have explained the reasons for the increases, and the general savings which this department has effected in its administrative work, and so I need not further take up the time of the Committee.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [8.46]: One or two of the points raised by the Minister require a little further explanation. I do not know of any other department of State which has been run so cheereparingly as the Crown Law Department. Generally speaking, I think its officers are wonderfully patient. They have been promised year after year that in due course their claims to further consideration shall be met. Yet they are as badly off now, notwithstanding the increased cost of living and the more trying circumstances of the times, than they were 10 years ago. There has been no honourable fulfilment of the promised increments in that department as far back as I can remember. Men are working at the same old salary and at the same old grind, with additional duties placed upon them, and apparently they get no consideration whatever. There are one or two cases I know of which in any other community would be regarded as almost scandalous.

Take one illustration which will have a place in the memory of the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith): There is an officer who has to look after large estates, who has thousands of pounds passing through his hands, who has to participate in all kinds of businesses and take enormous responsibilities. A recommendation was made by a select committee that his lot should be improved.

The Attorney General: We have increased him by £75.

Hon. T. WALKER: Which is not at all commensurate with the responsibilities of his post.

The Attorney General: That is true.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yet we expect those officers to be constantly at their posts and to be infallible in the performance of their duties. I may say the same, too, in regard to our magistrates, a body of men who for the most part have very onerous duties to perform. Extra work is repeatedly placed upon them by the department, yet not one thought is given to that extra work, as is done in other departments, and they are kept just exactly where they commenced, notwithstanding their faithful services.

Mr. Johnston: They are made Royal Commissioners without fees.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is a case in point. I know of two at least who have had these extra duties thrust upon them and yet no consideration whatever has been shown to them for this work. In all other departments the Estimates show that for night work, extra work, additional duties, additional allowances and pay are given; but for these men, apparently because they enjoy distinguished and honourable positions, no further consideration is shown. Seemingly the posts they hold are quite enough without any further consideration whatever. It would appear that that is the rule followed in the Crown Law Department. It seriously reflects on the progressive character of our State when we ignore our public officers in this way, especially those who have placed upon them duties almost equal in responsibility to those of our judges. They have the maintenance and administration of our laws, and according to the spirit which we infuse into them, will be the work they perform. If we would have them do their duty fearlessly and with justice to the public, we must have them more or less independent. If we have our magistrates paid salaries upon which they cannot live respectably in these times of high prices, we cannot expect them to exhibit that spirit of independence which they should have if the general public are to look up to them. Not only have some of these magistrates this extra work placed upon them without additional pay, but in spite of promises that they should commence at a given point and rise eventually to the positions occupied by their predecessors, no attempt is made to improve their positions. The senior magistrate of the State to-day is drawing a smaller salary than are other magistrates in the State, and a much lesser sum than was paid to his predecessor; yet he was

promised that, starting at the minimum, he should be very soon advanced to a position in which at least he should be on a level with the other magistrates. It is anomalous, it is not the way in which we can win respect for the position, a position which concerns us all, for we are all anxious to see that position respected by every citizen. Another point: A good deal of the saving that has been effected in this department has been due to the fact that officers who have gone to fight for us at the Front, or who have been taken away by the hand of death, have not been replaced. We have done without them; we have been starving the department. With all due respect to the Treasurer, I say we may save money at the cost of efficiency. I am quite certain that we could not starve that department much more than it has been starved during the last few years. If we want to get the best efficiency we must pay our officers what they could earn in like capacity outside the service; we must recognise merit.

The Attorney General: That applies to the whole of the service.

The Colonial Treasurer: And we cannot do it at present.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is exceedingly regrettable that we cannot. The result of it is that repeatedly we are depleted of our good men by the Commonwealth. It has been done in many instances; the Commonwealth has recognised the value of ability and merit and have taken our best men from us. We should pay for efficiency. The Treasurer says we cannot afford to do it.

The Colonial Treasurer: It would be a grand service if we could do it.

Hon. T. WALKER: And in the long run it would pay the State infinitely better than expecting to get the best men for a mere pittance. Another point: I am not quite sure that the Crown Law Department has honoured its promises to the men who went to the Front. I ask the Attorney General if those men who have returned from the Front have secured the exact positions they were entitled to by their previous services, or have they been obliged to accept make-shift posts?

The Attorney General: No; they have got what they were entitled to. I do not know of any officer dissatisfied on that score.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am not quite so sure. I have the name of one officer, which I will give to the Attorney General later.

The Attorney General: It is one of the things I have been very particular about, that a man coming back shall get the post to which he is entitled.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am glad to receive that assurance, and I trust that my information is inaccurate. I know that a promise was deliberately made when the man left the department.

The Attorney General: And it will be as deliberately carried out.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am pleased to hear it. I should like to know what active steps have been taken to define the limits of what I might call Commonwealth control of the

Attorney General's Department. Have any real, active, persistent steps been taken to limit the powers exercised by the Commonwealth over the administration of this department?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. T. WALKER: I shall be glad to hear what steps have been taken. We place at the disposal of the Commonwealth our magistrates and our courts, and in doing so, the officers of the Crown Law Department—not in the sense of acting as solicitors or counsel for the Commonwealth, but necessarily the use of our courts and of our magistrates for investigations into pension matters, for the hearing of cases purely created by Commonwealth legislation, and of Commonwealth offences.

The Colonial Treasurer: You raised some of those points when you were in office, but you did not get much satisfaction.

Hon. T. WALKER: No, we were put out of office.

The Colonial Treasurer: The files show that you did mention the matter.

Hon. T. WALKER: I was hunting very closely, but was not at all satisfied with this dilatory way of dealing with things. I am positive there would have been a row if I had still been there.

The Colonial Treasurer: It is astounding what things they did under the War Precautions Act.

Hon. T. WALKER: I know, but what protest has been made?

The Colonial Treasurer: There is a file a foot high on the subject.

Hon. T. WALKER: I should like to know what has been done. We talk about economy and the saving of money in the departments, but we can never save money whilst we are quietly taking the eternal encroachments of the Federal powers upon us. They are getting all our machinery into their hands, all our sources of wealth, our officers and our courts. We are becoming more or less tied hand and foot. We cannot move or breathe, and have no liberty of our own. By-and-by we shall be shorn of every element of local independent government. They over-step, overshadow, and control us at every step we are taking.

The Colonial Treasurer: You are not using any argument which was not used at the State Treasurers' Conference.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is time some stand was taken, if Ministers by private and unpublished correspondence cannot effect anything. Even if the Treasurers' Conference cannot achieve much it is necessary to move the legislatures of the various States to do something. Our own State should set the example in that respect. Private members cannot do it. It is a Government action and a step which the Government ought to take at an early date, otherwise we shall find the change too firmly riveted ever to be loosed from us again. Either we shall sink hopeless, die by virtue of their superior powers and cease to be a Parliament independent at all, or we shall have to make a strong resistance, one of such a nature that we may be able to guide the

rest of the States of the Commonwealth, and get a proper limitation of the functions of government, defining what the Commonwealth can do of right and what we can do of right. That is a necessity which ought not to be delayed too long. I am not altogether pleased that this department is being run at a cost of less and less money, because the work it is doing is of just as great a magnitude as ever it was. It only shows that savings are being made by imposing unpaid duties upon the officers of the department.

Mr. BROWN (Beverley) [9.3]: I intend to move for a reduction in the general vote. In doing so I wish to protest against the manner in which the Attorney General administers his department, more particularly in regard to his control of the departmental files. We had the spectacle a few nights ago in this Chamber of a letter being read, this letter having been written by myself and addressed to the Attorney General. If this sort of thing is to be allowed to go on in the different departments, it will constitute a grave danger. Any man can obtain a file and extract a letter from it, use it, and create an entirely different impression with regard to the case in question than would be created if all the correspondence on the matter were revealed. In the case that I am interested in, a letter was taken from the file and made use of, while a number of other letters on the file were not produced. If a member or any private individual is allowed to take a letter from a file, there is no occasion for anyone to move that the papers in question be laid on the Table of the House. The proper procedure for any member to take is to ask for the papers that he wants.

Hon. P. Collier: On a point of order, it was explained during the discussion last week that no letter was taken from any file in the Attorney General's office.

Mr. BROWN: A copy of it.

Hon. P. Collier: No, the letter was addressed to the Attorney General about a matter which had nothing to do with his department. The Attorney General did what all Ministers do on similar occasions. He forwarded the letter to the office of the Colonial Secretary which was the department properly concerned. If a letter has disappeared from the file it is not from any file in the Attorney General's Department.

Mr. BROWN: The matter is a judiciary one, and that was my reason for writing to the Attorney General. As the letter was written to the Attorney General, I take it it would appear on the files of the Attorney General's office.

Hon. P. Collier: No.

Mr. BROWN: Here is a reply to my letter sent by the Attorney General. Here is another letter which I wrote following up the matter, and here is a reply from the Attorney General's office.

Hon. P. Collier: They were all sent to the Colonial Secretary's department.

Mr. BROWN: This has nothing to do with that department.

Hon. P. Collier: It has to do with the order of the debate.

Mr. BROWN: The letters were sent to the Attorney General's department, and should be on the files there.

Hon. P. Collier: They were sent there improperly, and were forwarded to the Colonial Secretary's department. My point of order is that the hon. member is making a statement that a letter has disappeared from a file in the Attorney General's department. It has been clearly indicated that no such action took place. The hon. member is out of order in discussing the matter on these Estimates, and is out of order in making a statement which is not correct. The whole committee knows it is not correct, and the Attorney General can endorse my statement.

Mr. BROWN: The matter I am dealing with is in regard to the files. I think I have a perfect right to do so. I will leave the case entirely out of the question, if that will suit the leader of the Opposition. I do not desire to bring the case in at all.

Hon. P. Collier: You cannot do so in a discussion on this department.

Mr. BROWN: Unfortunately I had no opportunity of dealing with the matter the other evening. If this sort of thing is to become a general practice, a dangerous position will be created, and the sooner it is stopped the better. If papers are made available in the ordinary way, members can see every letter on them, and form their own conclusions on a proper basis. They will get the truth from the files, and will know whom to blame. I take exception to the Minister allowing his letters to be taken off any file, or even copies made of them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That letter would not have been read but for some of your colleagues.

Mr. BROWN: I regret that I was not here at the time. It was unfair to me, for I did not know that the matter was coming on. I hope this will not become the practice. Extracts may be taken from a letter to which no one could have any objection, but when a letter is taken from the file and quoted, as the letter in question was quoted, it is most unfair, because there are other letters on the file which show that the case is different from that which was placed before members.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner-Irwin) [9.10]: The question of the services performed by the Crown Law Department, as between the Commonwealth and the State, has been a vexed one, and has been brought up by every Attorney General for some time past. During the first Treasurers' Conference, at the instigation of the Attorney General I brought the matter fully before the Treasurers. Unfortunately, we had no opportunity of bringing it then before the Prime Minister. At the Sydney conference the matter was brought up again, and the reply we got from the Acting Prime Minister was that he believed in "pay and be paid." He suggested that it was a more satisfactory way of doing things than the method adopted in the past. Every Minister, and practically every department, finds an overlapping in respect of the services performed by the Commonwealth. At the last Treasurers' Conference it was arranged that three qualified men should be ap-

pointed to see where this overlapping should cease. In the conference in New South Wales this question led to a rather heated passage at arms between the Premier of that State and the Acting Prime Minister. The Premier of New South Wales said that some of these things were little less than impudence. That was the mildest term he could use to express his feelings on the subject. There is no doubt that, in these legal matters especially, there has been an abuse of power.

Hon. T. Walker: Abuse is the right word. The COLONIAL TREASURER: This has been done under the War Precautions Act. This Act was intended to give the Commonwealth a power throughout Australia over those things which had an effect on the war. The Commonwealth established butter and fruit experts. Whilst they said that the States were not competent to do these things properly they took, in almost every instance, a State officer at a higher rate of pay than he was receiving from the State. I agree with the member for Kanowna. Now we are at the end of the war, there must be a re-assertion by the States of their rights. There will have to be a conference, not necessarily a Government conference, but a conference of members elected by the State Parliaments, to see how this growing practice of minimising the States and of discarding the States' opinions, is going to be allowed to be pursued. We do not exist half our time as a State, and more especially in legal matters have the Commonwealth authorities got that far. I assure the member for Kanowna that no man sees the necessity of it and feels the necessity of it to a greater extent than I do, brought as I was at the conference into direct touch with the Commonwealth. We shall have to see how far those services which are rendered shall be paid for, and how much we shall pay for services that are rendered for us. As the acting Prime Minister said in Victoria, this is the only satisfactory basis to go upon. We took a claim in connection with some legal services performed by special constables under the Police Department. This was at a time when war first broke out. The claim was for £15,000. Matters went on until at last I said "I will put a writ into you if you do not settle the claim."

Hon. T. Walker: The work was performed at their instigation, too.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes. We have not had that money yet. We have the "hurry-up" on them now, however. I told the acting Minister for Defence and the present Minister for Defence that I would put a writ into them on account of the State if they did not pay up. As I was going to say, we shall be able to see how far they can ask the States to perform services for nothing, and how far they are to be allowed to charge the maximum whenever they perform the slightest service on behalf of the State. That is what we have got to. The member for Kanowna can rest assured that I shall not let the matter drop. I have seen the danger of Commonwealth usurpation of powers which were never intended to be the Commonwealth's. By that usurpation, the Commonwealth are going to take the sole control of Australia, and they do

not care a rap for us, as we shall find out when we come to discuss what subsidy we are to receive in future.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.16]: I desire to say a few words regarding the anomalous position of certain officers of this department, as pointed out by the member for Kanowna, who for some considerable time controlled the department. In every other department of the State, I think, the positions in Perth are always those sought after by the senior officers, as promotion; but in this department quite a different condition of things obtains. The magistrate of the Perth local court and the police magistrate at Perth receive lower salaries than any of the other magistrates, who, one would think, might reasonably after years of service in the country, advance their claims to positions in Perth. I suggest that in this matter the Attorney General should do justice on the lines of the Public Service Commissioner's recommendation, and on the lines of those promises to which the late Attorney General, the member for Kanowna, says he was a party. Whilst all other magistrates have residences, the two Perth magistrates receive no residence. Perhaps this is a matter with which learned members like the Minister and the member for Kanowna can best deal. It suggests itself, however, that if these magistrates are not supplied with residences, they should at least receive house allowances by way of making their positions equivalent to those carrying equally responsible duties in the country. The knowledge of the Attorney General should put him in a position to rectify the anomaly. We justly take pride in the independence and honour of our magistracy, and they ought to be properly paid.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.20]: I do not wish to discuss the Estimates of this department generally, but I do want to take advantage of the opportunity to return to a matter with which I dealt in this Chamber a few weeks ago—the administration of the Electoral Department. The amalgamation of the State and Commonwealth Electoral Departments has been a subject of discussion at all Premiers' conferences ever since they have been inaugurated, and the result generally has been the carrying of a motion referring the matter to the various State Chief Electoral Officers for consultation with the Commonwealth Chief Electoral Officer. But in the matter of amalgamation itself, or of making any progress towards economy, we have got no further ahead; and I venture to say the reason is that these officers, having in their own hands the matter of preparing a report or making a recommendation, bear in mind all the time the main chance. If the various Ministers controlling these departments in the States will not take any definite steps to amalgamate with the Federal department until such time as they are furnished with a thorough, practical working scheme from their Chief Electoral Officers, nothing will ever be done. These officers know perfectly well that they are practically asked to evolve a scheme which will mean losing their own positions; and that is just why we have never got any further ahead. These men are not going to point out a way whereby the

State Governments will be able to dispense with their services and throw them out on a cold world. But if there is any one State Electoral Department in this Commonwealth that deserves to be abolished for its incompetent management and control, it is the Electoral Department of Western Australia. It is about time something was found for the officer in charge of that department to do by way of earning his money—some genuine work; not just strolling around the streets as it pleases him, and casually riding up and down in the express train to and from Kalgoorlie, and in a lordly way issuing instructions to subordinate officers, and engaging solicitors, at a cost of a couple of guineas to the unfortunate defendants, for the purpose of prosecuting in electoral cases. All court work of this description might well be done by Mr. Stenberg himself. In Commonwealth electoral prosecutions an officer of the department invariably appears to prosecute. Not once in a Commonwealth electoral prosecution on the goldfields have the Commonwealth Department engaged a solicitor; whilst, on the other hand, not once, so far as I am aware, has an officer of our State Electoral Department done this work. Why bother with it when it can be passed on to somebody else? Our Chief Electoral Officer visits the goldfields half a dozen times per annum at a cost of 16s. or 18s. per day in travelling expenses, and has a herd of officers around him, also at considerable cost to the State; but he never appears to conduct a prosecution. I regret the file dealing with this subject is not on the Table to-night. I understand it has been recalled by the Crown Law Department.

The Attorney General: No. I had a subsidiary file asked for to-day, and I had to send for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I to-day asked for the file dealing with the whole subject, and was informed that it had been returned.

The Attorney General: Returned to the Electoral Department?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Attorney General: I did not know that. I had only one small file dealing with one individual case.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If a Minister or a department requires the use of a file, the practice has been to permit its return; but in that case, the purpose for which the file was required having been accomplished, the file is to be returned to this House at the earliest possible moment. I have been informed that this particular file was taken away yesterday. If that is so, whatever the reason for which the file was required by the department, there has been sufficient time to allow of its return to this House by to-day, in accordance with the usual practice.

The Attorney General: I dealt with the matter this afternoon. It was a matter of remission of penalty. The file will be returned to-morrow.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I only wish every member of this Committee had had time and opportunity to peruse that file for his own satisfaction. If members had done so, they could come to no other conclusion than that the file disclosed the fact that the electoral prose-

cutions in question represented the worst prostitution of justice that has ever occurred in this country. From beginning to end the file reeks with telegrams and letters from a political organisation on the goldfields. The Electoral Department permitted itself to be taken over absolutely by that organisation—the file shows it—by the National Federation on the goldfields. The file discloses instances where Mr. Stenberg, the Chief Electoral Officer, took instructions by wire, or by urgent wire, or by urgent letter, from the secretary of this organisation. And the Chief Electoral Officer wires back urgently, "Yes, this will be done," or "That will be done." The whole department was taken over and run and controlled by that political organisation for the purpose of these prosecutions. That, in my opinion, is a shocking thing, particularly in the case of a department that has to do with the administration of justice. It is almost incredible that such a department should allow itself to be administered by an organisation possessed of bitter, vindictive partisan feeling against another body. I should like to have read the whole file; it would have been very instructive. In the first place, Mr. Stenberg never attempted to institute a prosecution against any person on the goldfields who was not known to be a supporter of the Labour party. Is it Mr. Stenberg's duty to sit down without himself making any endeavour, or causing any of the officers of his department to endeavour, to ascertain whether there are persons enrolled on the goldfields without the necessary qualifications? Is it his duty to sit still doing nothing until some political body comes along and supplies him with the information, whereupon he goes out and hunts up further information, and obtains reports, and prosecutes if necessary? Is he thereupon once more to relapse into somnolence until some other body comes along? Nearly all those prosecutions were based upon the annual ratable value—nearly every one of them. First of all, a list was obtained from the roads board office showing annual ratable value. Then, in cases where that value was anything under £17, inquiries were made.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The annual ratable value had nothing to do with it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: True; but that was the foundation of the prosecutions. As showing that the department relied upon the annual ratable value, I need only mention that on practically every occasion they put the secretary of the roads board in the witness box to prove what was the annual valuation. Mr. Stenberg was asked by myself and other members of this party on several occasions whether the annual ratable value could be taken as a basis, and his reply was, "No; certainly not." But in these prosecutions the department relied on that practically every time.

The Attorney General: But you must first get the valuation, and from that you deduce the annual value.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How does Mr. Stenberg deduce that? Of course I recognise that it is very difficult. In any case, it is another mat-

ter. But, Mr. Stenberg having obtained these valuations from the local governing bodies, how is it that the information led him to investigate none but cases of men known to be supporters of the Labour party?

The Attorney General: How do you know that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know of my own knowledge that throughout that long series of prosecutions, extending over six months, there was not one person prosecuted but was known to be a supporter of the Labour party.

The Attorney General: I do not know personally about the goldfields, but down here the contrary holds good.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know anything about down here. Still, I do know that down here there was not such a spiteful, unscrupulous, vindictive body urging on and pushing for persecutions as on the goldfields. The file shows that such was the condition of affairs on the goldfields, and that Mr. Stenberg allowed himself to be instructed by that body. He writes—

I have to-day received this list of men whom the secretary of the National Federation states to be not qualified.

Then he sends out this note to the police officers, "Will you make urgent inquiries at once." All the instructions are marked "Urgent," so that prosecutions shall be instituted at the earliest moment. I could have supplied Stenberg with a list of the names of men known to be supporters of the National party who were equally guilty of these offences.

Mr. Teesdale: And why did you not supply them?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because I am not in the habit of pimping. One of these men was prosecuted on one day by the Commonwealth for not having his name on the roll, and on the next day he was prosecuted by the State for having his name on the roll. And that is what we call making the world safe for democracy! There is a letter on the file from the officer in Menzies who conducted the prosecution there on behalf of Mr. Stenberg. This is what he says—

The above case was heard in the Menzies Police Court to-day before P. L. Gibbons, R.M. The defendant did not appear, but sent in a letter to the court pleading guilty, and stated that he had been misinformed at the time of signing the electoral paper. I called Constable Donovan to prove the facts of the case, and he also swore to the photo., exhibit A, being a true photo. of defendant's camp. I pressed for a heavy penalty, pointing out that this was a case of roll stuffing. The defendant was fined £5 and costs £1 1s., in default 21 days' imprisonment.

And right throughout the prosecution the department pressed for heavy penalties. Never once did the Commonwealth press for a heavy penalty. All those cases in which prosecutions were instituted were the result of ignorance of the law, and it was therefore an outrage on justice to prosecute those people when the department did not know, and when Stenberg did not know, whether a man

possessed qualifications entitling him to enrolment. Stenberg himself said that the Act was faulty and required amendment. Was that not a reason why some commonsense should be exercised in connection with the administration of the Act? Here is another case on the file in connection with which Stenberg wrote to the Under Secretary for Law on the 16th September last—

I may add that one of the photographs which the Minister sent to me some time ago, and which had been obtained from Mr. Frank Moss, related to this case and was used when the case was being heard. It appears hereunder attached to page 12. It must be admitted that on the face of it this qualification appears somewhat rocky.

This is Mr. Frank Moss, who has been for years president of the National League in this country; he is the man who forwards the photographs to the Minister, photographs sent to him by his brother, who is manager of the mine at Comet Vale, a man who has been a vindictive political opponent of the Labour party all his life, and if the member for Menzies were here he would say of that Moss at Comet Vale that he would sack all Britishers from his mine if he could get foreigners to work there. As a matter of fact he always had 75 per cent. of foreigners working for him and sent Britishers on tramp. This man is winning the war by sending photographs of these houses to the Minister, so that the occupants of those houses may be prosecuted because they were £1 or £2 short of their qualifications. I am sorry those photographs are not here. But if Moss, the mine manager and the president of the National League got busy, they could go round photographing the camps of all his employees and send them to the Minister, so that the occupants of those camps might be prosecuted as well. I, too, have taken the trouble to get a few photographs of these houses. When speaking on this question before, the Minister said "Look at them; they are only bough sheds and humpies."

The Attorney General: I did not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Here is the case of Mrs. Burnett, who was prosecuted because the annual value of her house was £15, only £2 less than was required by the Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the road board valuation was £15 she should never have been fined.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then there is the case of Sadler, the president of the National Labour party. The annual value of his house is £15, and he voted. I have here the photographs of the two houses, the house of Mrs. Burnett and the shanty of Sadler, and I ask hon. members to compare them and say which, in their opinion, would be rated at the higher annual value. Does it not appear to hon. members that the house of Mrs. Burnett is the better one of the two? The other one seems to be nothing but a conglomeration of iron strung together. Yet the woman was fined and the man was not prosecuted at all. What was Stenberg doing in such a case as that? I have here two other photographs, and I ask hon. members to look at those also.

In this case the supporter of Labour was fined, though he did not vote at all; he was fined for just having his name on the roll, and because the annual value of his place was £10. Then there is the case of Mr. Crow.

Mr. Teesdale: You connived in those cases by not reporting them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will always connive at that sort of thing. Should I pick out houses here and there and then go to Stenberg? I do not object to Crow voting; I am not complaining about that.

Mr. Teesdale: You would if there were three or four hundred of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There were three or four hundred of them. I have a list of 34 taken from one district only. These were all prominent National Labour supporters, who all voted. The hon. member must not think that because they were not prosecuted they did not vote. But what I want to know is what Stenberg is doing? Why did he not get a list like this one, where the valuations were £10, £12, £14, and £15? No; because they were all supporters of the National Labour party. Stenberg is not fit for his office if he is only going to take action when these matters are pushed under his nose by a political organisation. Was it not his clear duty to take a roads board roll and send out his investigating officers impartially to everyone whose annual ratable value was below the amount set down in the Act? He did no such thing. He waited until he was pushed by political partisans, and the whole thing went on for six months, the limit in which prosecutions could be laid. And right up to the last moment they were sending urgent letters around to get in a few more before the time-limit expired. And all this at the instance of a man like Moss. I do not mean Frank Moss, whom I have found a broad-minded man; I refer to his brother, the manager of the mine at Comet Vale, who forwarded photographs to Perth, and who set the whole machinery of the department going, actuated as he was by no other desire than to persecute those politically opposed to him. What I also complain about is that in every case the most expensive firm of solicitors were engaged. What were the loafing members of the Electoral Department doing? What was Stenberg himself doing? In one case a fine of 1s. was imposed, and the costs came to £3 15s. 6d., and this is how they were made up:—Court fees 7s., McGuppy, police constable, 6s. 6d.—I think that is a new move; I do not know that police have been allowed to collect witnesses' fees before—Brennan, witness, 12s. 6d., F. C. Simpson, secretary roads board and—his name appears in every case—7s. 6d. Simpson was making money out of the business. The last item is, solicitor's costs £2 2s., and the total, including the fine, came to £3 16s. 6d. Is that not an outrage?

Mr. Teesdale: Were the secretary's fees allowed in every case?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Attorney General: No court would allow two fees on the same day for the same individual.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is another case in which a fine of 1s. was imposed, and in which the costs came to £2 13s. 8d. These penalties were imposed on people who are struggling hard to live in these days of heavy expenditure. Here is a letter from Mr. Stenberg to the Attorney General dated 15th April, 1918. He says—

With reference to the claim submitted for enrolment in connection with the above Province rolls I made certain investigations at my recent visit to Kalgoorlie as an outcome of information supplied to me by the secretary of the National Federation at that centre. From my preliminary inquiries it seems to me probable that certain electors have made false declarations in their claims and in order to have the various points cleared up in court prior to the election—
That is underlined. It goes on to say—

I have arranged with the Federation—
That is how the department is being administered—

to furnish me with specific cases under different headings, so that publicity may be given to the results, and a warning issued with the object of preventing other electors who may be similarly placed, from exercising their votes at the impending election unless they are satisfied that their claims are sufficient and correct.

And so on. "I have arranged with the Federation to supply me with a list." The idea was not only to secure those not qualified to exercise the vote but to bluff others who were not possessed of the necessary qualifications, so that when they were asked to sign on the voting day they would not sign. What have we come to? The Chief Electoral Officer is only concerned in the administration of his department when supplied with information or urged to take action by the secretary of a political organisation. Every time he went there, he rushed to these people, "Have you got any information; if you have give it to me." He writes to the acting secretary of the National Federation, Kalgoorlie, as follows:—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, giving particulars of the claims with regard to which I conferred with you at my recent visit to Kalgoorlie. I have already obtained the Hon. the Minister's approval for prosecution in every case where the Crown Law officers recommend such action as an outcome of their review of the evidence available. I am writing by this mail to the Electoral Registrar at Kalgoorlie to obtain the necessary evidence for prosecution.

And so on. The file is made up of nothing but letters, backwards and forwards, from the Chief Electoral Officer and the National Federation. I am certain these details did not come under the notice of the Attorney General until later on when he said that only gross cases were to be dealt with. This is a fine state of affairs. The Chief Electoral Officer entered into partnership with this organisation, and every time he is unconcerned whether there was one, a score, a hundred, or a thousand others on the roll who were not

qualified, except those handed to him by these political partisans. Here is another one. The Attorney General writes to Mr. Harris the secretary of the National Federation on the 18th April—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. and to inform you that the Chief Electoral Officer has been instructed to take immediate steps for the investigation of the cases you have submitted for inquiry; and to institute proceedings against the claimants in every case where the Crown Law officers recommend such action as an outcome of their review of the evidence that will be available. There will be no delay in this matter, and I am hopeful that any proceedings that may be instituted from the information laid by you will be finally dealt with in sufficient time before the election, to be of service as a warning to other electors similarly situated, and to prevent the exercise of the franchise by such persons at the forthcoming elections. Inquiries will also be made with regard to any other claims which were submitted to the Registrar by persons who held insufficient or no qualification at all, and these also will be dealt with at the earliest possible moment. But, of course, as the law prevents, by Section 52 of the Electoral Act, any alteration of the roll between the issue of the writ and election day, such prosecutions cannot affect present enrolments. The candidates have, however, the power, under Section 118 (4) of the Act, to request the presiding officer at each polling place, through their own scrutineers to ask any elector, whom they may have reason to believe is not qualified, to sign a declaration Form No. 9 (copy attached) before he can obtain the ballot paper for the purpose of recording his vote. I shall therefore be obliged to you if you will assist by furnishing the Chief Electoral Officer with the names of any electors on the present roll who, in your opinion, have claimed, whilst in possession of insufficient or no qualification for enrolment. (Sgd.) Attorney General.

The whole machinery of the department is worked by the secretary of the National Federation. Does the Attorney General send similar letters to the secretary of any association with which I am attached?

The Attorney General: That is in reply to a letter.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know it was.

The Attorney General: As a matter of fact I have asked personally members on your side to give me similar information but, like yourself, they did not supply it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister may have had better luck if he had written to some of the associations. The Chief Electoral Officer writes to Mr. Harris again. Here is the letter—

I beg to refer to interview at my last visit to Kalgoorlie and shall be obliged if you will inform me, as promised, as soon as possible of the likely number of challenges you will make use of at the various polling places in the North-East and South Provinces, so that I will be able to provide a

sufficient number of declaration forms for such purposes.

Did you ever hear of such a thing in your life? If the secretary of the organisation had in mind the challenging of intending electors, was it not his business to write for the form, but here the official asked for the number of forms required so that he might be ready with the number of forms. The secretary of the league was the instructor and master of the Chief Electoral Officer. It was the business of the Chief Electoral Officer to ask how many forms would be required. Mr. Harris says—

Replying to yours of the 19th inst. re number of forms required. I have not overlooked the matter. I will advise you as early as possible as to my requirements.

Mr. Sanders writes to the Chief Electoral Officer as follows—

In regard to the Susan Burnett—I find on looking closely into the claim that the word “freeholder” appears to have been added by one of our clerks, who took it for granted that the value shown—£50—indicated freeholder. I hardly think this would make a good case. Mr. Harris has several local cases concerning which evidence could be quickly obtained and the cases brought on early. I understand he is communicating with you. I should be pleased to know if there is a likelihood of your visiting Kalgoorlie soon. Mr. Nairn: He is most enthusiastic.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, the file shows numerous wires. “I shall be pleased to know when you are coming up to help me.” “I have the policemen on the job, will you hurry up?”

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He forgets that the pendulum swings to and fro.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to show how the whole thing is a political prosecution. No one is connected with the prosecution except men who are active, who have all their lives been active opponents of the Labour party. I have shown where the mining manager at Comet Vale, the scab who would not employ a Britisher if he could get a Dago, who sacked Britishers with big families and kept hulking able-bodied foreigners in their places. There are members who can bear me out in that. I have shown how that gentleman goes forward and assists; I have shown where the secretary of the organisation takes a hand, and now I will show where the Chamber of Mines comes in and takes a hand. Mr. Sanders writes on the 25th April—

Under separate cover please find police report on the five electoral claim cards sent for investigation. Mr. Hamilton of the Great Boulder—

He is President of the Chamber of Mines.

and Mr. Embleton of the South Kalgorli mines have been good enough to lend every assistance to the department, and have had plans prepared setting out the position of claimants' property. Should the surveyors be required to give evidence they are easily obtained.

And so on. There you are, Mr. Hamilton, President of the Chamber of Mines, and Mr. Embleton, and the files show that there were tracings, most elaborate tracings setting out the boundary lines of the residences owned by

people, to show whether they were in the North-East or in the South Provinces. These persons placed the whole of their surveying staff at the disposal of the National Federation, who in turn forwarded the information on to the department. Then we have Mr. Harris again writing, but the date is not given, to Mr. Stenberg. He says—

Further to the matter of electoral enrolments of persons whom we consider do not possess the necessary qualifications. As the result of further inquiry, I submit lists for North-East, and South Province, containing 35 and nine names respectively attached hereto, indicating the number, name of elector, and locality. I am still prosecuting inquiries regarding many other electors, of which I will advise you later.

Would you not imagine that he was an officer of the department? "I am still prosecuting inquiries of which I will advise you later." It is what you would expect of a subordinate officer sent up to inquire. Yet, Mr. Stenberg acts in co-operation with these men, and Mr. Stenberg must have known who he was because he signed the letters as acting secretary of the organisation. He must have known that the man was acting by political bias and prejudice and feeling in the matter. He was acting as a puppet and jumped when Harris pulled the strings. Then Mr. Stenberg writes again—

I beg to submit herewith further lists of electors on the North-East and South Province rolls, forwarded to me by the National Federation, Kalgoorlie. The lists are composed of electors who appear to the National Federation to possess insufficient or no qualification at all. I shall be glad if you will request the District Inspector of Police to assist this department by having similar inquiries instituted to those recently undertaken on behalf of this department. As the Hon. the Minister desires these matters dealt with without undue delay I shall be glad if the urgency of the matter be pointed out.

All through the file the urgency of the matter is stressed—

As the cases are fairly numerous and refer to different localities it will expedite matters if the individual reports were at once forwarded to me as they come instead of delaying such action until the whole of the inquiries have been completed. Please request the Police Department to use the same method of inquiry as on previous occasions directed by the Crown Law officers in their memo. of (?). The original claim cards will be sent to you from head office without delay.

That is the whole file, and one is typical of the lot. Here is a list sent in where prosecutions have taken place, 10 cases, and Keenan & Randall's costs amount to £20 1s. It is shocking to think of a firm of solicitors, and the whole strength and power and influence of the Crown Law Department, aided by the advice of the Crown Solicitor, of the Electoral Department, of the Police Department in Kalgoorlie, of the National Federation, and of the Chamber of Mines—that is the combination—all working in together in order to heap up heavy costs upon those poor unfortunate individuals whose scalps they were

after. It is a situation to be proud of! I suppose that when this matter was being pressed by such influential persons, Mr. Stenberg took the view, as so many of our high public officials do, that he would best toady to his political bosses by acting as he did. Mr. Stenberg would not have acted in that manner had he not been of the impression that he would please those under whom he was serving for the time being. I should have liked to read the whole of this file so as to place it on record in "Hansard" to stand as a monument of the most iniquitous piece of political persecution that has ever taken place in this country. If the administration of the Electoral Department depends upon its being taken over and controlled by a political organisation, it is time it was wiped out of existence altogether. This well-paid, indolent gentleman who is in charge of the department could go up there and wander around for a few days at considerable expense to the State, but he could not be troubled to ask his officer or the police to report on any one of the scores of cases whose annual valuations were as low as those of the people he was prosecuting. Should it not occur to any officer who knows his business, when relying on the annual rateable value, as he largely did when launching his prosecutions, rateable values of £20, £12, £14, and £16, should it not have occurred to him to investigate similar rateable values? Yet he never did it once. Can it be imagined that there are not those on the other political side who voted without proper qualification? I challenge the department now to take action against men who did vote and who knew perfectly well that they had not the necessary qualifications, men with homes of a rateable value of £10. What is going to be done with them? I hope we shall never again have such a spectacle. I will vote, and even fight, for the striking out of every item of expenditure in connection with the Electoral Department. It is only by striking it out altogether that we shall impress upon them the necessity for finding some other means of having the work done by the Commonwealth Electoral Department. It is a reflection on the intelligence of the officers of both departments to say that no practical scheme can be devised under which the one department can attend to the work of both. It is a bluff which they put up because they do not want to lose their bullets. If hon. members desire to effect economy, let them strike out the expenditure of the department, and let Mr. Stenberg obtain some more useful occupation than being at the beck and call of unscrupulous persons, as he was in these cases.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning—in reply) [10.5]: Replying first to the leader of the Opposition, let me say I feel personally glad that he has not, since reading the file, repeated the personal attack he made on me before he had read the file. I give him my assurance that the department had issued general instructions, and that after a deputation which waited upon me, I decided that prosecutions should only take place in respect of gross cases. Dealing with the amalgamation of the two departments, I do not quite agree with the leader of the Op-

position in laying the blame at the door of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will never effect an amalgamation until you learn to keep the officers out of it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That may be so, but I believe that Mr. Stenberg, as the senior electoral officer, had a great deal to do with the formation of the scheme. But the fatal part of the scheme put forward for the consideration of the late Government was that the Commonwealth wanted to control the department. I shall never be a party to handing our electoral department over to the Commonwealth.

Mr. Johnston: Why not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They exercise sufficient control over certain State departments now. Our rolls are warmly criticised, but they are perfect as compared with the Commonwealth rolls. There are on our rolls hundreds of names which do not appear on the Commonwealth rolls, notwithstanding that the Commonwealth have compulsory registration. Our rolls are in much better order than are theirs.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I will be bound they are not so to-day.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They were at the last election.

Mr. Jones: Yes, because we saw to that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think it fair to put the blame for this lack of co-operation between the State and the Commonwealth on the Chief Electoral Officer. The reason for it is that the Commonwealth wanted to control the whole thing. I object to that. Why should they not adopt our rolls?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Because some persons qualified to be on the one roll are not qualified to be on the other.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That could be rectified. The leader of the Opposition found fault with that file in that it reeked with letters and telegrams from members of the National Federation on the goldfields and showed that information was continually supplied by that organisation in respect of individuals improperly on the rolls. That is not any new feature. The Electoral Department, under each successive Administration, has always followed up any complaints made to it from any source whatever as to the qualifications of those on the roll.

Hon. P. Collier: But it has never before worked in co-operation with a political organisation such as this.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is a question of viewpoint. A person writing a letter to the department may stress his case more than he should do. Is that any reason why it should not be considered? As Attorney General I frequently receive petitions for the release of prisoners, couched in language which I do not like; yet I do not do a prisoner the injustice of not fully reviewing the question because the petitioners have addressed me in overbearing fashion. I believe in letting every application stand on its own merits. And so, too, with the Electoral Department, when an application comes along complaining that certain individuals

are wrongly on the roll, it is purely a question of fact for the officer to investigate.

Hon. P. Collier: Is it for the officer to decline to make the slightest investigation for himself as to any other cases, as was done in this instance?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not aware that that is a fact. It is a statement by the leader of the Opposition. I have asked the Chief Electoral Officer why he did not have his officers go through the claim cards from beginning to end. His answer was that it would have taken six months. As a matter of fact, the whole of those claim cards were received within a very short period. It is always the way just before an election, when there is a rush of people in the electorate to see who may be wrongly on the roll, and to add others to the roll. The wish of the department is that everybody entitled to vote should be on the roll.

Hon. T. Walker: The file seems to say, "Keep all off whom you can."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, No. Here are numbers of persons on the roll alleged by individuals and organisations to be there wrongly. Of course it is a question of fact, to be inquired into. It should be the duty of the Chief Electoral Officer, and that duty is going on in all constituencies every day of the week, to inquire into claim cards and persons on the roll.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are very ignorant of what is taking place.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the bluff which the Chief Electoral Officer has put up.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is what I am informed by the department. It is continually going on; but in respect of this election on the goldfields, when over 1,000 names were added to the roll within a very short time, it was impossible to inquire into each of those cases. No doubt in that election some voted who had no qualification at all. In all the cases to which attention was drawn an inquiry was made, and in the gross cases a prosecution was conducted.

Hon. P. Collier: No inquiry was made except where attention was drawn?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, inquiries were made in many other cases.

Hon. P. Collier: If a departmental officer says he will not inquire into anything of the kind, what manner of administration of justice shall we get?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The question of the administration of justice by the court does not enter into it. It is merely a question of administration by the department. With regard to the photographs which have been referred to by the hon. member, I shall be glad if he will lend them to me so that I can inquire into each case. I should like to know which photograph has to do with leaseholds and which has to do with freeholds, and to which electorates the places belong.

Hon. T. Walker: Will you report to the Committee the result?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I shall be glad to do so. There is not a single case to

which my officers have drawn my attention that I have not inquired into, and in many of such cases I have reduced the fine. It has been stated that only voters of the Official Labour party have been attacked.

Hon. P. Collier: I was referring to Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was a general statement.

Hon. P. Collier: I only spoke of Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot answer for Kalgoorlie and Boulder, because I have no idea who was and who was not attacked.

Hon. P. Collier: These are the only districts to which I referred.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Speaking of that of which I do know something, I would point out that there have been many well known residents of Perth, who could never by the slightest thought be imagined to belong to the Official Labour party, who have been fined substantial amounts for breaches of the Electoral Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How long ago?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: During the last six months.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How many were there?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There were several.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Only one.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was a man before me only to-day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think he was a lawyer.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: My instructions to the Chief Electoral Officer have always been to impress upon him that there must be no discrimination between political parties, and that all must be treated alike. I wanted people to be prosecuted for breaches of the law, and not because they belonged to a particular party.

Mr. Jones: Have the fines been paid in the case of the offenders in Perth?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. In the particular case that I had before me this morning there is a petition for a remission of the fine. That is the reason why the file which was on the Table of the House was sent for. The hon. member said that the secretary of the roads board was put into the witness box in each case. There is nothing wrong about that. In country districts there is probably no one who understands more about the holdings of the different persons than the secretary of the roads board.

Hon. P. Collier: In this case the secretary was only put into the box to prove the rateable value.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. gentleman says no one can say what the annual value is. I have said before—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That the annual value is the annual value.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That the annual value is, in fact, the value. If a house in Perth is bringing in £52 a year, that is its actual value, and in fact its value. The rateable value of that house, however, is £31 a year, that being the proportion adopted in the city of Perth.

Hon. P. Collier: It is easily fixed in a case of that sort.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I believe that proportion of £52 to £31 is taken throughout the metropolitan area.

Mr. Willecock: Which value do you take for electoral purposes?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The £52, which is the actual value. The £31 is a hypothetical value.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the rental value.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If I were asked what was the fair annual value of a house producing £52 a year, and on looking at it I thought that it was a fair value, I should say that was its actual value, although the municipal valuation would, in the case I instance, be £31. I know something about this matter because I have for a great number of years served, and am still serving, on a road board. In my opinion no man can get a better education on the various phases of the life of the country than in our road boards or municipal councils, where proper attention is given to the work. I take the same pride in my work on the road board as the member for North-East Fremantle does in his capacity. In the road board with which I am associated, as is the case with other road boards, the valuation of vacant land is reduced by about 20 per cent. in order to give it what is known as the road board value. The actual value is first found and this is reduced by 20 per cent. on which a rate is struck. The municipalities take the actual value first, and fix a lower value for rating purposes. The reason why the lower valuation is taken is because of the rates, insurance, upkeep and repairs, which fall upon the owner. So far as the valuation for electoral purposes is concerned, this would, in the case I have instanced, be £52. When a road board secretary is asked to give evidence he does not take that value on which the rate is struck.

Hon. T. Walker: Yes, he does.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He should, in fact, state the figure at which that house or land has been valued by the board, which is quite a different thing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you put in a claim on the gross value the Chief Electoral Officer will reject it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think he would. That would be wrong.

Mr. Willecock: The Electoral Department will not give a decision.

Hon. T. Walker: They have misled a lot of people.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In this respect the law is not at fault at all. The question of clear annual value is one of fact.

Hon. T. Walker: And it is one of opinion.

Hon. P. Collier: Mr. Stenberg says the Act is at fault, and he has pressed for an amendment of it for many years.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, and neither the hon. member's Government nor this Government have amended it. I think it is time the Electoral Act was amended. This claim card business is a farce. We find people running up and down the streets, getting all and sundry to sign cards whether they are qualified or not. That is ridiculous. As in-

telligent people we ought to be able to evolve an Electoral Act which will place everyone on the roll who is entitled to be there, irrespective of creed or politics.

Hon. T. Walker: Without friction and without fail?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Holding this opinion I have gone to the length of asking those gentlemen from the other side of the House who waited on me to put their views in writing, and set down their ideals as to what the Act should be. The officers of the Crown Law Department have also broached the question with me, and have set down their views on an amending Act in a confidential memorandum. I shall be only too glad to consider the suggestions which are made to me by those who hold political views opposite to my own, and endeavour to evolve an Electoral Act which will do away for all time with these wretched objections. If these objections do not come from one side, they come from the other. I have quite as big a jacketing from persons on the side that the member for Boulder is condemning as I have from him. The Act does not please anyone. It should be so framed that all persons who are entitled to go upon the roll should be placed there and be allowed to stop.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not stop there.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have found that when I have been away and have returned my own name has been removed from the roll. Some kind friend, or enemy, holding an opposite political belief to my own, has evidently sent to the Electoral Department and stated that I was not entitled to be on the roll. Some officer has gone out to where I was living and found that I was not living there, and my name has been struck off the roll. That has happened twice to me, and must therefore have happened to thousands of other people in the State. The Electoral Act is one of the most stupid statutes we have, and if this discussion does no other good it will certainly accentuate my desire to have that measure altered as speedily as possible. Now about the lawyers: why did we not employ Mr. Stenberg to prosecute?

Hon. P. Collier: Or your local officer.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I inquired about the local officer, and was told that he was not good enough to deal with those complaints.

Hon. P. Collier: He is one of the most capable officers in the service.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There are some men who are very capable at conducting cases in court, while others are not.

Hon. P. Collier: My opinion, and also the opinion of others who know him, is that the local officer is an infinitely more capable officer than Stenberg.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It may be asked, why did not we send the Crown Solicitor to the goldfields to prosecute? My opinion was that the wisest thing, in order to get away from all dispute, was to employ a local lawyer. When inquiring into individual cases as to whether I should recommend a reduction of penalty, it is my invariable practice to

obtain the opinion of the magistrate who tried the case; and I have been informed that when the costs are so large the fine is minimised accordingly.

Hon. P. Collier: To the lay mind it seems that 1s. fine with £2 or £3 costs represents an outrage.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The magistrate has thought that a total mulcting of £3 or £4 would meet such a case. I think that undue prominence was lent by the leader of the Opposition to the Chamber of Mines in this connection. I do not think the Chamber of Mines had any more to do with these prosecutions than you had, Mr. Chairman. As the representative of a particular mining lease, Mr. Hamilton was applied to by the Electoral Department for a plan of the leasehold; and he had no surveyor at all employed to do the work. Mr. Hamilton simply took a blue print out of one of his pigeon holes and supplied it to the Electoral Department.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister is not correct there. If he will bring the file here to-morrow, I will undertake to show that a surveyor was put on to do the work.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If a surveyor was put on, it was at the request of the department, in order to determine whether a particular man was in Brown Hill, or in Ivanhoe, or in Hannans. That is all a surveyor would be required for. Anyhow, I think this electoral matter has been discussed for the purpose of ventilating it. Certainly, it has nothing in the world to do with my Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes; it is in your Estimates.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But I do not think hon. members who discussed the matter debated it from the point of view of the Estimates so much as from the point of view of the electoral system.

Hon. P. Collier: But the upkeep of your department is in these Estimates.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The department is run economically, and my assurance that we are looking into the question of the electoral law with a view to bringing in an amending Bill next session should be a sufficient answer. Another important phase was raised by the member for Beverley (Mr. Brown). I think that hon. member was wrong in attacking the Attorney General's department. The leader of the Opposition put the case quite correctly. The member for Beverley wrote to me as Attorney General making a complaint as to something which touched the Police Department. He thought, no doubt, that the matter, being a legal one, fell within the Crown Law Department. I, as is my custom, sent the hon. member a courteous reply; but I passed his letter on to the Colonial Secretary. I have no doubt that on my file there will appear a letter something to this effect, "I enclose a letter from so-and-so, together with copy of my reply. This falls within your department. Will you please inquire?" Something of that sort would be written by me to the Colonial Secretary, and with the original letter of the member for Beverley would go to the Colonial Secretary's office. The Colonial Secretary then, in the ordinary

course, would send that file to the Police Department for inquiries to be made; and I believe it to be quite possible that the file would then be sent by the inspector of police to the officer concerned, in order that the latter might answer the question as to dereliction of duty suggested by the member for Beverley. Whether the officer concerned then took a copy of the letter or not, I do not know, because the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) has not disclosed to the Committee how he became possessed of the copy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That letter would never have been read here but for the interjections of some friends of the member for Beverley.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I quite believe that; but I was wanting to satisfy the member for Beverley as to how a letter, or a copy of a letter, could get off the file, get off, in a measure, legitimately; although I am quite prepared to argue that no Government officer, in the Police Department or elsewhere, has any right to take copies of documents in that way.

Hon. P. Collier: This police officer did not do so, either.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am only guessing. The copy certainly did not get off the file in my department.

Hon. P. Collier: No. It did not get off in any department.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The leader of the Opposition evidently knows how the copy did get off the file.

Hon. P. Collier: If the Minister wants to find out how, the Police Department know all about it. It was done legitimately.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I only want to satisfy the member for Beverley on the point. Next, in answer to the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston), who made a suggestion as to the positions of the magistrates. The subject is a very difficult one. When I occupied the position of Minister for Mines as well as that of Attorney General, I particularly wanted to have a general roster among the magistrates. Many of the magistrates outback have been there too long; many holding snug positions in the coastal towns have been there too long, and want shifting. But when I made that suggestion to Mr. Wilson as Treasurer, he objected to the expense of the shifting round; and the same objection has been raised by the present Treasurer. However, I consider that the time has come when a number of changes must be made in the residences and official positions of our magistrates. Regarding the two Perth magistrates, the position is very difficult. In making the remarks I do, I have no wish to offer any disparagement of the Labour Government or of their methods in this connection. The late Labour Government thought fit, instead of promoting magistrates who had been on the bench for many years, and who had lived at, say, Albany or Bunbury or Geraldton or Kalgoorlie, to the Perth magistracies, thought fit to appoint two new magistrates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Two professional men.

Hon. T. Walker: Professional men, in accordance with the Commissioner's recommendation.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Very likely. They are professional men, and no doubt there was good reason for their appointment. But the two appointments have to some extent paralysed the successors to the Labour Government in making any changes in the magistracy, because neither of the Perth magistrates can be sent away to Albany or Bunbury or Geraldton—Kalgoorlie is the only station of equal value with Perth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Oh, keep the Kalgoorlie man where he is.

Mr. Green: No. Send him to Fremantle.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Kalgoorlie magistrate is a very good officer; one of the best in the service. But I want hon. members who have criticised to understand the position. Country representatives want to know why their magistrates are not sent to the City. The reason is that the two magistrates appointed to Perth are professional men, and certainly qualified for their positions.

Mr. Pickering: Are they both professional men?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. I assure hon. members that in the coming year I propose to make some changes in the country magistracy, changes which I hope will give satisfaction to the magistrates themselves—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have to satisfy the people.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: And the people as well.

Mr. Green: Why not give the clerk of courts at Kalgoorlie a chance?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He is a fine man. The only other matter I have to reply to is in regard to remuneration for Royal Commission work, and why the Perth magistrates do not receive more pay. No one knows better than I do that the senior magistrate of Perth is not being paid sufficiently for the work he performs, but I am very much in the same position as the member for Kanowna when he filled the position of Attorney General. He, too, had a Treasurer who told him there could not be any increases in the salaries of officers of the service. I hope, however, that the financial stringency will lift as the clouds of war have lifted, and that before long we shall be able to pay salaries to the senior members of the civil service which, many of us know, are so well deserved. There is no officer more deserving than the senior magistrate of Perth. That officer is one of the most highly qualified men we possess. He is a man of sound judgment and has had very few appeals lodged against the decisions he has given.

General debate concluded; votes and items discussed as follow:—

Item, Chief Electoral Officer, £432.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In my opinion the Chief Electoral Officer should not work in conjunction with any political body. It is the duty of this officer to see that persons whose names should be on the roll are placed there and that those who are not qualified to vote should not be enrolled. It is only in isolated cases that the department ascertain whether a

person is qualified to have his or her name on the roll or not. The officers of the department sit in their offices instead of going out to carry on investigations. I do not suppose they could tell us whether 75 per cent. of those who are now on the roll are qualified to vote because immediately after an election they cease work. I was sorry to learn from the leader of the Opposition this evening that the Chief Electoral Officer has been working in conjunction with the secretary of a political organisation. Of course if the secretary of a political organisation sends in a complaint to the Chief Electoral Officer, that officer is bound to reply, but he should go no further than to make an inquiry into the matter. He should not go to the secretary and ask to be supplied with the names and the qualifications of people and then write and refer to "my interviews with you." It would be an easy matter for the Chief Electoral Officer to take his roll and compare it with a roads board or municipal roll. He could form his own opinion as to whether the annual value was above the rateable value. When the Chief Electoral Officer works in conjunction with a political body he is doing what is wrong because he has all the machinery to enable him to find out everything for himself. The leader of the Opposition intends to move in the direction of striking out the item for the purpose of impressing on the Ministry the necessity for working in conjunction with the Federal Government. I am not satisfied with the Federal rolls by a long way. If we have to depend on the rolls provided by the Federal department, we shall not know where we are when an election comes along, we shall not know whether it is necessary to get out a supplementary roll; and on past experience, it is clear that the Federal Government do not care a hang whether we know or not. If this amalgamation is brought about we shall be in a worse position at election time than under our present system. I am one of those who like to know whether their names are on the roll, and I think it wise to print supplementary rolls. Unfortunately Parliament stopped that last session. It is our duty to see that our rolls are in order. I do not see anything derogatory in a man going round getting names for the roll, so long as he is qualified to go on himself.

Mr. Willcock: It should be done by the State.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The State does do it. I admit that I have done it myself, but only because the Minister would not provide the money to have it done by the State. There were no other rolls in the State last year as perfect as those for Fremantle and North-East Fremantle.

Mr. Green: Your presence here is sufficient guarantee of that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Minister intends to enter into arrangements with the Federal Electoral Department, I hope he takes good care that the control of our rolls is held by our own department.

The Attorney General: That is the attitude I have adopted so far.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Under that system we shall have a better roll and will know more

about it than if we have to rely on the Federal department.

Mr. NAIRN: The hon. member opened his remarks by saying that the Chief Electoral Officer should not work in co-operation with any political body or association. I entirely endorse those remarks. There is nothing more calculated to bring about friction than allowing an officer of any department to work in with any political organisation at all. I was surprised to learn that there is some doubt in the minds of members as to the interpretation which the Chief Electoral Officer places on the "clear annual value" of a house, entitling a person to have his name upon the roll. The question was raised of roads boards assessments, and it appears that secretaries of roads boards have been called in to give evidence in support of the department as to the value of land. The roads board assessment should not be accepted for this purpose. We all know from experience that the assessment of the roads boards and municipalities is always below the clear annual value, and therefore it is an improper basis for the enrolment of an elector. On that point the Chief Electoral Officer should be clear and definite. But the question which I rose to discuss is the charge made to the leader of the Opposition against a prominent officer of the State. The leader of the Opposition, in unqualified terms, castigated that officer. In the interests of the community and of the department, a full and complete inquiry should be made into those charges brought by the leader of the Opposition. It is the duty of the leader of the Opposition to exhaust whatever powers are available to investigate the conduct which he complains of. I cannot say whether or not his statement is correct, but most serious charges have been made, and it is the duty of the House to furnish an inquiry into those charges. Personally, I shall not be satisfied until the leader of the Opposition or some other member moves for such inquiry. The Attorney General has said that no prosecutions were launched against one political party, because that party was not accused of wrong doing. But the files do not clear up that point, which is left in complete darkness. From outside appearances there must be some reason why all the prosecutions were levelled against the members of one political organisation.

Mr. Munsie: Because the whole of the information supplied to the department came from one source alone.

Mr. NAIRN: Notwithstanding the Attorney General's statement that the question of justice is not involved, I say it is involved, and that in the interests of justice and of the proper administration of the department it is the bounden duty of the officers of that department to investigate both sides of a question. There can be no doubt that the department, having had brought before it so many cases connected with the one particular political party, must have been suspicious that something was happening on the other side. It is said to be the duty of the officer when waiting to have an information laid before him to conduct such reasonable and intelligent investigation as to ensure that justice is done. The statements of the leader of the Opposi-

tion are grave and serious, affecting as they do the head of a department which enters so much into the political affairs of the community. I hope he will see that an inquiry is made so that the light is thrown clearly on the question which has been raised to-night.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Attorney General has given what he considers to be the meaning of the qualification under the Electoral Act. I think he should give us an assurance that a complete definition of the qualification required for enrolment for the Upper House is given. This will afford far more satisfaction than the present slipshod definition. I tried to get a definite statement from the Chief Electoral Officer on the point, but he could not give it to me.

The Attorney General: If that was so I would suspend him to-morrow.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is so.

The Attorney General: I have heard him say that a printed statement is issued by him and placed before every elector, setting forth the qualifications in full. It is the hon. member who is mistaken, not the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He cannot say what the exact qualifications are. He said that a person required to have a property of a clear annual value of £17, but did not know how this was arrived at. I asked him if he took the road board valuation, the landlord's valuation, or his own.

The Attorney General: He takes the annual value.

Mr. WILLCOCK: What is that?

The Attorney General: Prove in a court of law what it is worth.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Attorney General says that the practice in Perth is to take the proportion of £52 to £31, or 60 per cent. of the annual value for municipal purposes. He says that 60 per cent. of the actual value is the value for rating purposes.

The Attorney General: The full value is £52.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I would point out that people have been prosecuted, the annual value of whose property is £15, which is a much greater percentage than 60 per cent., being a little over 80 per cent. Will the Attorney General say that the annual value in Perth is about 60 per cent. of the actual value? It is impossible to get a definite ruling from the Chief Electoral Officer as to whether a man is properly on the roll or not. It is high time the department gave a definite and clear statement upon what the Act says in connection with the annual value.

Mr. MUNSIE: I would probably not have said anything in connection with these particular Estimates had it not been for the interjection of the Attorney General just now. I do not blame the Chief Electoral Officer for the present position. He has a file quite nine inches high dealing with his efforts during the past eight or nine years to induce the Government to have the Act amended, but up to date he has not succeeded. The statements made by the member for Geraldton are absolutely true. I have been to the Chief Electoral Officer myself with two or three

other members in order to get from him an interpretation of what is meant by a clear annual value of £17, but we have had to go away just as wise as when we went there. He could not or would not give a definition. We put to him every question we could think of as to how we were to arrive at the valuation, but he would not admit that any of the proposed courses was the correct one. We asked if he would take the road board valuation, and he replied that this was not fair. He was asked what valuation he would take, and he replied "The evidence produced in court." We then asked "How are you to get that evidence," and he replied "I suppose from a sworn valuator."

The Attorney General: You said he did not know.

Mr. MUNSIE: Then we asked "Do you contend that people who make valuations for road boards or municipalities are sworn valuers?" What are their pretensions to the position? In every case that came before the court in Kalgoorlie, when persons were prosecuted for not possessing the necessary qualifications to go upon the roll, the court accepted the valuation made by the acting secretary of the Kalgoorlie road board. The Attorney General says the value is that which is proved in court, but in Kalgoorlie the magistrate has on every occasion accepted the road board or municipal valuation. It is neither the meaning of the Act nor its intention that this should be the case. There are instances in which men are paying rent for their houses at the rate of 9s. a week, and in one case a man is paying 10s. 6d. a week for a house which is valued by the road board at £7 a year, and that man is legally entitled to go upon the roll. If he owned the house, however, he would have been prosecuted.

The Attorney General: A man paying 10s. 6d. a week would not be prosecuted.

Mr. MUNSIE: I know of men owning their own houses which are not the equal of the houses for which others are paying 10s. 6d. a week rent, and which are not the equal of the houses owned by men who were prosecuted for signing a false declaration because their property was not up to valuation. It is time something was done. It is not possible for any member to get from the department a clear definition of what is meant by a clear annual value of £17, and as to how this is to be proved. I cannot get it, and I have been there more than once to try to get it; and so have other members. We tried to get it in writing: we sent the Chief Electoral Officer telegrams and letters on the subject, but on each occasion he evaded giving an answer. And yet the Attorney General to-night tells us that if the Chief Electoral Officer does not know, he, the Attorney General, will suspend him in the morning. The officer may know, but he will not tell us if he does.

The Attorney General: I will undertake to tell you on Friday or Saturday morning.

Hon. P. Collier: But that will not be what the Chief Electoral Officer says.

The Attorney General: You want a definition that will suit you.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Chief Electoral Officer should be able to give anyone an intelligent direction as to how one may arrive at a claimant's qualifications.

The Attorney General: So he can.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not say whether he can or cannot; but I do say that he will not give such a direction. I do not know whether anyone else gets it from him; but we do not. For my own part, I do not blame any man who houses a wife and family in a domicile for trying to get on the Legislative Council roll in respect of that domicile. I care not if the roads board value the dwelling at only £1 per annum: I say that many is not committing any crime in presenting a claim card. The only proper way to amend the electoral law is to have a household qualification, if there is to be any qualification at all.

Mr. LAMBERT: I desire to refer to qualifications in Coolgardie. I have drawn the Chief Electoral Officer's attention to the somewhat significant fact that in Coolgardie there are men apparently qualified to vote in respect of vacant blocks valued at £50. To Mr. Stenberg's credit let me say that he asked me to perform what I regard as the duty of the Chief Electoral Officer and furnish the Electoral Department with a list of such voters, in the same way, apparently, as he had been supplied with lists of the kind by political partisans. I was not prepared to comply with his request. But I do know that there are voters on the Council roll in respect of vacant blocks in Coolgardie which could not be given away. In view of the prosecutions which have taken place, that fact amounts to a downright scandal. It is not for the Electoral Department to take the municipal valuations. Mr. Stenberg has sufficient time and sufficient officers for direct investigation of each individual case on the spot. It has struck me as most peculiar that freehold qualifications, especially in such circumstances, should not be questioned. The fact tends to make one believe, no matter how desirous one may be of retaining a high opinion of an officer, that possibly political partisanship is creeping in. I agree with the member for Swan that, utterly irrespective of party, whether our own party or any other, the Attorney General would be well advised to discountenance the slightest interference springing from any political feeling.

The Attorney General: You did not listen to what I said. I instructed the officer very particularly on that subject.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am very pleased to hear it, and I trust that the regrettable incidents of the last Legislative Council elections will not be repeated. I agree with the member for Hannans that any man or woman with a residence should be entitled to vote for the Legislative Council. Possibly that desirable state of affairs will arrive more speedily than some people anticipate.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not wish to treat hon. members with discourtesy, but I should be only going over the same ground again if I replied on this item.

Mr. MUNSIE: One other point to which I feel bound to call attention is the Electoral Department taking notice of political organisations. The strongest proof that this occurs is afforded by the recent prosecutions in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Possibly for the safety of the electors, or possibly as a deterrent to the recording of one's vote at all, certain instructions were issued and made public: every voter challenged at the poll must sign a declaration that he or she possessed the necessary qualification. As a result, hundreds of electors in the North-East and South Provinces who really had the qualification refused, when challenged, to vote. But dozens of people without the qualification did vote after having been challenged. The Chief Electoral Officer's attention has been drawn to the matter, and the names have been given. Yet no prosecutions have taken place, because the offenders were nationalists. There is no question about that.

The Attorney General: I deny that the names were submitted. Give me the names, and I will prosecute. The leader of the Opposition has repeatedly said that no names were given.

Mr. MUNSIE: Personally I would not put anybody away in this country for trying to obtain a vote for both Houses of Parliament. But, as a matter of fact, the names have been published, and a photograph has been published in a newspaper of the house of the President of the National Federation in Kalgoorlie. No doubt he was challenged. A photograph of his house appeared in the "Worker." The roads board values his house at £10 per year.

Hon. P. Collier: If he was challenged, there ought to have been an inquiry.

Mr. MUNSIE: If he had been a Labour supporter, a policeman would have called on him the same day, as in the case of actual Labour supporters. Here again are some of the most unfair tactics I have ever experienced in my life. A policeman comes round just about dusk with a typewritten sheet of questions which he puts to the person concerned, and the replies to which he himself writes down. The interrogation having been completed, the policeman hands the statement to the person for him or her to sign. The defendants stated in court that they did not know what was being asked them, and neither did they know what they were signing, and when they were prosecuted, the documents they signed were put in as evidence against them. That was dirty tactics to adopt, and even after attention was drawn to it this still went on.

Mr. LAMBERT: It is due to us to know whether it is the duty of the Chief Electoral Officer to inquire into the value of the freehold blocks in Coolgardie to-day, and also as to the qualifications of the owners to vote. I know there are men in Perth to-day whose names are on the South Province roll as being qualified to vote as owners of blocks of land that are not worth a song. We should know what the Chief Electoral Officer is doing in this respect. I hope the Attorney

General will ask the Chief Electoral Officer for an explanation of this matter. Certainly that officer is not showing much zeal over the matter.

Hon. P. Collier: He is too lazy to do anything.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know about that, but as he is not displaying that zeal which he should be doing, he is not likely to die of heart disease.

The Attorney General: I will make inquiries.

Vote put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore [11.24]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to Thursday, the 21st November.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 21st November, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

MOTION—PACIFIC ISLANDS' CONTROL.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.36]: I move—

That this House declares that it is essential to the future safety and welfare of Australia that the captured German possessions in the Pacific Ocean, which are now occupied by the Australian and New Zealand troops, should not in any circumstances be restored to Germany, and that in the consideration and determination of proposals affecting the control of these islands, Australia should be consulted.

There is no need for me to elaborate this question; the motion speaks for itself. A similar motion has been passed by the Federal Parliament, and it is thought that the hands of the Federal Government might be strengthened by the State adopting this motion. Undoubtedly all Australians will feel that it would be a menace to the safety of Australia if those islands were to revert to German control. The

possession of those islands by a power which has shown during the last four years that it is desirous of obtaining worldwide control, with a particularly jealous eye on Australia, would be distinctly inimical to the Commonwealth. At least the Federal Government should be consulted in regard to the determination of any proposals that may be made concerning the future control of those islands. The motion fully embodies the views of all Australians who are proud of the fact that the Australian and New Zealand forces were able to secure possession of those islands during the early stages of the war. One could speak at length on a subject such as this, but I think that as the object of the motion is merely to back up the Federal Government in any determination they may resolve upon—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Has this been introduced at their request?

The PREMIER: No. I have not had any official request. However, as this has been determined on by the Federal Government, and as it has been suggested in the Federal Parliament that the States should express an opinion on the subject, I desire without further comment to submit the motion.

Mr. BROWN (Subiaco) [4.39]: I second the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.40]: Let me say at the outset that with the object and purpose of the motion I am in entire sympathy. There is no need to waste words in regard to the position of the Pacific Islands and the danger it would spell to the future life of the Commonwealth if Germany should ever be permitted to again get a footing there. I do not wish to see Germany again a back-door neighbour of Australia. Having made myself clear on that point, I must admit that I question the wisdom of a motion of this character being brought forward in a State Parliament. Australia has already spoken on this question through the one Parliament which is entitled to speak in the name of Australia; our national Parliament has passed a motion dealing with this matter, and for my part I think it would be a mistake for the State Parliaments to take up matters of international concern arising out of the war.

The Colonial Treasurer: The acting Prime Minister has asked us to do this.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad to have that explanation. As a matter of fact, I knew something of this. Moreover, I know, or at least I would be prepared to swear from the wording of the motion, that the acting Prime Minister in his turn was asked by the Prime Minister in Great Britain to pass this motion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would be better to gag him.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Much better. That is the position. Why is this motion submitted to the State Parliament? I can understand the national Parliament passing it, although I regret that even that Parliament should have taken such a step. The Australian National Parliament is the first Parliament in the British Empire, in fact, the first among the Allied countries, to pass a motion dealing with any of the problems that will have to be settled at the Peace Conference.