

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 1st December, 1921.

	Page
Bills: Health Act Amendment, 2nd. Com.	2040
Stamp, returned	2056
Perth Hebrew Congregation Lands, 2nd. Com., report	2056
Annual Estimates: Department of Railways	2057

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

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 16th November.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.35]: The former part of this Bill is what the House has considered for some years past, namely that dealing with what is known as the signed statement. For some considerable time there has been strong opposition regarding the legislation that we have at present in force dealing with venereal disease.

Mr. Underwood: Has it proved wrong?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I will show the hon. member. The Minister pointed out the other night that the provision had not been abused. He also showed that unless this provision was left in the Act it would be impossible to administer it properly for the purpose of dealing with the disease. He backed that up by the statement that only two cases had been reported during the past year.

Hon. P. Collier: He said it was saving the community.

The Colonial Secretary: That is so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A charge can be made by way of a statement against any man or woman. The Minister states that if this provision were wiped out venereal disease would over-run the country. He has said that there have been only two cases in the past year to which this provision has applied. This shows that it has not had much effect so far as the administration of the Act is concerned during the past year. It did not, as indicated by the Minister, save a large number of people from suffering as a result of this disease. It did not have the effect of decreasing its ravages, and this proves that the people did not avail themselves of the provision last year. I object to the principle that is involved. I do not care whether there are two or a dozen cases concerned. I object to the principle whereby any person, no matter who he or she may be, can lodge a complaint against another person, and cause that person to suffer an indignity, while the individual lodging the complaint escapes.

Mr. Underwood: Where do you find anything about lodging a complaint?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is in the Act.

Mr. Underwood: There is no question of lodging a complaint.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is a straight out accusation. It is made by a person as a matter of fact. The person who is reported is definitely accused. The consequence is that the accused person is called upon by the Commissioner of Public Health to submit himself or herself for medical examination.

The Colonial Secretary: Not necessarily so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is in the Act.

The Colonial Secretary: He goes about it in a most diplomatic manner.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not care how he goes about it. That does not alter my assertion. No matter how diplomatic he may be, the fact is he does this.

The Colonial Secretary: He has the power to do so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is true that the person who is asked to submit himself for examination can go to any doctor he pleases, and is not forced to go to any particular doctor. If however, the Commissioner enforces the compulsory clause, in the event of a person refusing to go to a doctor, he has to go to any doctor named by the Commissioner. In the case of a woman, one of the doctors must be a lady doctor. The power exists, whether it is exercised or not, to put the compulsory clause into force if a person will not of his own volition carry out the wishes of the Commissioner. According to the figures which have been given, the Act has been shown conclusively to be a danger. On the 27th October, 1920, Mr. Podd in another place asked the Minister for Education—

How many times has the Commissioner of Public Health taken action as the result of secret information, to enforce medical examinations upon persons supposed to be suffering from venereal disease.

The Minister for Education replied—

In forty cases, since the Health Amendment Act of 1915 came into operation, has the Commissioner of Public Health served notice under Section 256, Subsection 1, but in no case has it been necessary for him to cause a person to be compulsorily examined. Of these forty cases, five were lost sight of, six had themselves medically examined and produced negative evidence.

The Commissioner asked the people concerned to submit themselves to a medical examination, and did not call in the aid of the police to assist him in carrying out the provisions of the Act, as he might have done had he put the compulsory clause into action.

Mr. Teesdale: That shows how considerate he is.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not dealing with that question. If the hon. member had been in his seat when I commenced my remarks, he would have heard—

Mr. Teesdale: I know it by heart. I have heard you four times.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member has only been here for three sessions, and could not have heard me four times. In one session I did not speak on the subject at all.

Mr. Teesdale: You agreed with it to a certain extent.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No. It was a rushed thing last session. The hon. member would have heard me say that I object to a person being permitted to lodge information against another without signing the information, whereby the person charged has to suffer all the indignity and the person making the charge suffers none.

Mr. Underwood: But you are imagining the lodging of the complaint.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: What I am saying is, not imagination, but fact. Of those 40 cases five were lost sight of, six had themselves medically examined and produced negative evidence; in two cases the conclusions were unsatisfactory, and one is still pending. The remaining 26 cases were found to be infected and consequently they placed themselves under medical treatment. The next question was, "How many persons have been notified by medical practitioners or departmental officers that they must be examined?" and the answer was "The 40 referred to in reply to question No. 1." The next question was, "How many were females?" and the answer was "40." It shows conclusively that the Act is used only to get at the women.

The Colonial Secretary: That is not so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Apparently the women refuse to lodge unsigned complaints—in other words, they are more manly than the men, they will not take a mean advantage of an Act which enables them to lay an unsigned charge. Up to the 27th October, 1920, not one man was asked to submit himself for examination under the provisions of the Act. The next question was "Does the Health Department consider the provisions of the Act in relation to venereal disease are operating successfully?" and the answer was "Yes." No doubt! Since six women, under request by the doctor, presented themselves for examination, knowing that if they did not comply with the request the department could call in the assistance of the police and have them compulsorily examined. And all six of them under examination proved to be perfectly healthy, or, at all events, returned negative results. Yet we are told that the provision has been a success! The greatest indignity that could be placed on any woman is to compel her to undergo such an examination.

The Colonial Secretary: There has not been any compulsion so far.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister cannot hide himself under that statement. There has not been any compulsion, because the women knew that if they failed to go along at the request of the doctor, they could, and would, be compelled to go.

Hon. P. Collier: They were none the less compelled because they walked there themselves.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There was no necessity for extreme action. The women went in order to avoid additional scandal and indignity.

Mr. Underwood: What are you trying to do, eat those women, or what?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wish to goodness somebody would eat the hon. member, or at all events kill him! How would hon. members like any of their own family, those near and dear to them, to be subjected to such treatment on the report of some scoundrel? How would they feel if, their dear ones having been proved under examination to be healthy, it was found that no action whatever could be taken against the person who lodged the information? It is all very well to say we are here to put legislation on the statute-book; but we ought to ask ourselves how we should like that legislation to be exercised against ourselves. No member of the House would like this provision to be applied to himself or to members of his family.

Mr. Lambert: But there is legal redress for arrest on a wrongful charge.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, one can take action for damages if wrongfully arrested on the information of some known person. If the hon. member were to charge me with theft, and I were arrested on his false information, I could, on proof of my innocence, claim damages from him; but in the case under consideration I could not even get his name. Is that justice?

Mr. Underwood: There is no such thing as false information in the Act.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know what the hon. member means. He knows well enough that in a case of alleged venereal disease one person can report another to the Principal Medical Officer.

Mr. Underwood: And the Principal Medical Officer can act.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He does act.

Mr. Underwood: If he has reasonable ground to believe.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: How can he take any other line of action? Is not the very information reasonable grounds for belief? What clearer grounds could the doctor desire before he believes? It is all very well to say it depends upon who lays the charge and against whom the charge may be laid. British law is supposed to be based on justice and equality. Under the Australian law we are all equal, including him who is cleaning the gutters and him who holds the position of Premier. The legislation regards us all as being equal. We require, not to take into consideration who or what a man may be, but rather the effects of the law and how it can be applied. In all probability, we shall have an outburst regarding this question from some members who have spent a few years in the North-West; because a certain disease has been prevalent amongst the natives of the North-West, a disease that

has never yet been definitely diagnosed as true venereal diseases.

Mr. Teesdale: We have plenty of the other up there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The public has been led astray. Grave doubts have been cast on the true nature of the disease up there. When in office I had a long talk with a doctor from the North-West. He went very closely into this question. He was of opinion that it was not syphilis he had to contend with up there.

Mr. Underwood: Not true syphilis.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Those hon. members who indulge in outbursts on the question are led away by the large number of natives who have been segregated and put into hospitals in years past. By those members the disease infecting the natives is regarded as ordinary syphilis.

Mr. Teesdale: I wish we had none of it at all, whatever it is.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I agree with that. We have gone mad on the question. In respect of no other disease has there been so much exaggeration by the medical profession.

Mr. Teesdale: Proportionately we have not so much of it in the North as you have in Perth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am with the hon. member. I have said that the natives are not suffering from true venereal disease, or that at all events there are grave doubts as to what their ailment really is. The outbursts which occasionally come from members representing the North are based on the prevalence of a disease which is not the disease dealt with under this provision. Why did we become insane on this question?

Mr. Teesdale: To protect women.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Oh, was it? I will deal with that presently. Great protection is afforded, when six women have to go up for examination, whereas not one man is called upon to go up!

Mr. Teesdale: You would not give us one per cent.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: After the war we were afraid we were going to have a serious outbreak of venereal disease to contend with.

Mr. Teesdale: We got it, too.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Our figures do not show it.

Mr. Underwood: The Act prevented it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, because during five years only 40 cases were reported, and last year there were but two. How could that have prevented it?

Mr. Teesdale: What about our clinics?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. Those who go to the clinics are reported, and the position so far as this State is concerned is that the numbers have been decreasing and not increasing, and the decrease in my opinion has been brought about by the existence of the clinics. I am not condemning the whole of this legislation; I do not want it to be understood that I think it is unnecessary for the Government to take some

action for the purpose of abating a disease which is a danger to the community. But this Bill does not deal with that; it does not deal with the general question; it only deals with one portion of it.

Mr. Teesdale: You are dealing generally with it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: What I am pointing out is that the legislation existing to-day was the outcome of panic largely brought about by the medical profession. At that particular time Dr. Cumpston issued a pamphlet dealing with the disease; later on there was a conference and the legislation existing to-day was the result. We were told at that time that about 25 per cent. of the population were suffering more or less from venereal disease. What has been proved since then? That only about 3 per cent. are suffering from it.

Mr. Mann: From the disease or from the effects of it?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: From the disease. As a matter of fact, these medical gentlemen almost tried to make the community believe that there was scarcely an individual in the State who did not have the germ of the disease. Statements like this were made for the purpose of passing the legislation which those gentlemen wanted. Members of this Assembly then gave them that legislation, and it is that portion of it which I am endeavouring to remove from the Act. The matter was considered by this Assembly, and it was shown that the existence of such a law meant the interference with the liberty of the subject to such an extent, and that the danger from its operation was so great, that it was decided that it should not be permitted to remain on the Statute-book for more than 12 months.

Mr. Underwood: This Assembly passed it without hesitation.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This Assembly said, "We cannot allow such a law to remain in force for longer than a year."

Mr. Underwood: This House passed it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Exactly, but stipulated that it should terminate at the end of 12 months.

Mr. Underwood: You are wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And from that time to the present, a Bill has been brought in each year to continue the operation of the law.

Mr. Underwood: No, it was the Legislative Council.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member is wrong. The motion was moved by Mr. Veryard, the then member for Leederville. Now the Government are so anxious to make it a permanent measure, that they introduced this year the Bill, not in the Assembly, but in the Council. They were afraid of the public; they knew they were treading on dangerous ground. Public opinion, however, was so strong that they withdrew the Bill from the Council.

The Colonial Secretary: It was withdrawn because it was a money Bill.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is all bunkum. That question would not have affected the Bill one bit; the money clauses of the Bill could have been printed in italics.

The Colonial Secretary: You are not right.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member knew that the people of the State were opposed to this legislation and the Government, having become scared, withdrew the Bill.

The Colonial Secretary: That is not so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was so. Ministers in their own hearts knew that they were perpetuating the perpetration of an indignity on the women of Western Australia which they had no right to do.

The Colonial Secretary: Nonsense!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Western Australia is being held up to the world by the members of the medical profession as the most virtuous State in Australia, and this for the express purpose of getting rid of a disease which does not exist, at any rate, any more than it does in any other part of the world. We are advertising ourselves, or are taking steps under the Bill to advertise ourselves as if we were rotten with venereal disease. In almost every publication we see some reference to what Western Australia has done. During the three years that I was in charge of the Medical Department, I found that that department wanted to segregate people for almost anything, and that they were carrying out their exaggerated views to an extent beyond that which the people of the State would stand. I wish again to emphasise that I am not entirely opposing this legislation, I am only opposing that portion of it which permits a person to present an unsigned statement.

Mr. Mann: Have there been complaints about acts of hardship since the law has been in operation?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If anyone belonging to me were ordered up for a compulsory examination, and that examination gave a negative result, I should not be too anxious to make the matter public unless I had the opportunity of prosecuting the person who made the accusation.

Mr. Underwood: No one belonging to you will ever be brought up for examination.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Still, the Act gives that power. I remember an election in England, 1885, in a district in which I was living in the division of Cumberland. One of the candidates had been a great supporter of the Contagious Diseases Act and it was on that that the fight was taking place. That Act had been in existence for some time, and there were many instances where young girls had been run in for the purpose of being medically examined, and in no case had it been possible to point a finger at them. The outcome of that election was that England wiped out that statute. Why? Principally because the people were up against anything which resulted in the liberty of the subject being interfered with. Western Australia in 1915 or 1916 advanced so quickly that it introduced legislation which England

kicked out in 1885. We in this State are going backward.

Mr. Underwood: The British Parliament has followed us.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They have not followed us. The Government in New South Wales closed down on this legislation; they would not have it; they would not listen to the exaggerations which had been made in regard to the disease. As a matter of fact we have not got the disease in Australia to the extent that the medical officers would have us believe. Our own figures prove that to be so.

Mr. Teesdale: Why would they exaggerate? They have mothers and daughters and wives.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We had somewhere about a thousand cases reported last year.

Mr. Underwood: No, 800.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Many of those might have been cases that had been dealt with before and had come forward again. Is it such a serious matter that we must pass a law whereby people—women particularly, because it is only that section of the community against whom the legislation is enforced—must have indignities heaped upon them, by arresting them if necessary on an unsigned statement lodged by a person with the Principal Medical Officer. I noticed only the other day that even in England there are some supporters of a system in regard to venereal disease, which has not been carried into effect. No less a person than Lord Knutsford said that there was an increase of 23,000 cases in the hospitals in London, his object being to build up legislation which they have there. But there was a doctor attached to the London hospital who challenged the statement at once, and said that he would not allow such a serious assertion to go unrefuted. He gave the figures for several years, and the total increase for the year 1920, which was given out to the public as being 23,000 cases, dwindled down to 1,370. The doctor did not believe in these compulsory clauses, and he showed the matter in its true light. Consequently, the public decided that there was no need for legislation of such a drastic nature as we have in Western Australia. The Minister pointed out the other day that once the department got hold of a person under this clause, he would have to follow up the treatment until he was cured.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the benefit which is claimed for it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, and there is not the least doubt that in New South Wales it was thrown out on the same point. The Minister wants to hold such persons until they are cured, but the Government of New South Wales threw out the proposal knowing that a cure could not be guaranteed. If they got hold of a person and dealt with him in the way desired by the Colonial Secretary, they would have to keep him for life, because a cure could not be guaranteed.

The Colonial Secretary: That is not right.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have a copy of "The Medical Journal of Australia," from which I will read a letter to show the difference of opinion on this question. It states—

The "Cure" of Gonorrhoea and the Venereal Disease Act. I observe that under the Venereal Disease Act, which is shortly to come into force in New South Wales, the medical attendant is required to give a certificate of "cure." This appears to me to be a serious matter inasmuch as no medical man can, under any circumstances, be sure that any patient who has had gonorrhoea, has become free from the disease. Neisser declared his scepticism as to the cure of any patient of either sex who had once become infected. This is perhaps going too far, but it is quite certain that we have no criteria whatever whereby we can declare that patient to be free from infection.

The Colonial Secretary: He does not know much about it.

Mr. Teesdale: That puts the negative business away. These women might have had it all the time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We might all have had it.

Mr. Teesdale: No doctor could say.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is what I want to prove. I wish to prove that the Bill is useless, and I am quoting the words of a medical man to prove it. The letter continues—

I believe that the test to be applied is that two successive smears shall show the absence of the gonococcus. In the case of the male, this test is ridiculous, and in the case of the female it is preposterous. The gonococcus may be absent from ten successive smears, and yet the organism may be present in the patient and liable to cause infection to others. It is a well-known fact that gonococci may be present in the threads found in the urine of males, even when they have no discharge at all. In the case of the female, the test has even less value. The serious aspect of this matter is that the medical man is asked to give a certificate of "cure" to persons to whom he must know that a large number are still infectious. If one of these "cured" persons marries and infects an innocent woman with this devastating disease, then surely the medical man who gave him a certificate will incur a grave responsibility. Legally, of course, he can shelter himself behind the "two-smear" fiction, but whether morally he has the right to do so is another matter. If the law prescribes a test which he knows to be utterly inadequate, is it right for him to prostitute his professional name by signing what is really a false declaration? If we sign these papers, the country will be full of these "legally cured" sources of infection. Their gonococci may have no locus standi and in fact may be legally dead, but I fear that excommunication of this kind will do little to induce

them to mend the evil of their ways. There are other objectionable features in the Act, and I think that it would be an admirable thing if a general meeting of the Association were held to discuss the Act in all its bearings; and it is possible that some of these bearings will surprise the authors of this Act when it comes to be enforced. If the Minister for Health could be induced to attend such a meeting, so much the better, for he would hear the views of those having a practical acquaintance with the disease. Obviously the authors of this Act have not come into contact with any such. Arthur S. Vallack, 233 Macquarie-street, Sydney. March 31, 1920.

That is the opinion of another doctor and it shows what a difference of opinion exists.

The Colonial Secretary: He is only one authority.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course I should not put anyone up as an authority against the Minister. Let me tell the Minister a little story about one of his own doctors.

Hon. P. Collier: You must not swallow all they tell you.

The Colonial Secretary: That is only the opinion of one doctor.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: My late friend, Dr. Hope, on retiring from the Civil Service of Western Australia, went to the war. When he got to France amongst some of the greatest medical experts of the day, he discovered that a certain medicine used in typhoid and other fever cases was producing wonderful results. I received a communication from him in which he mentioned the name of the medicine and quoted the number of cures recorded and the number of days the patients spent in hospital. I thought the information would be useful here. I took it to a doctor, one of the Minister's advisers. I showed him the letter and said, "Would not that be a good thing to get for the protection of our own people in case of an outbreak of fever? It has been proved in France and you have the opinion of a man who knows our conditions and who recommends it." The doctor read it down and then remarked, "I have not seen any reference to it in the 'Lancet' yet. He attached greater importance to an article in the 'Lancet' than to the opinion of a man whom he knew and who had had experience of the medicine. I want members to realise that what the Bill provides for has nothing whatever to do with the cure of venereal disease. What the Bill provides for has nothing whatever to do with the means for curing venereal disease. The Bill seeks to extend for a further 12 months the right of any person suffering from venereal disease to lodge with the Commissioner of Public Health a charge against any other person to the effect that he caught the disease from that other person, and to do this without signing his name to the charge. That is the only question in the Bill as regards venereal disease. Unfortunately, the measure has been used in this State principally against women. Forty cases were reported to the end of October, 1920, and all

of them were women. If members believe it is right that anyone should be able to lay a charge against a woman without signing his name to the charge, they will vote for the Bill. If members believe it is wrong that any man should be able to lay a charge against a woman without signing his name, thus enabling the woman, if the charge proved to be groundless, to demand the name of the informant, they will vote against the Bill. The Government have not had the pluck to propose making this provision permanent. The Minister went a little astray with regard to one matter. He said there might be a large number of cases in Western Australia treated by chemists and others and not notified.

The Colonial Secretary: They could get chemicals and mix them up for themselves.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: To that I would reply "Well, I'm damned," if it were not disorderly.

Mr. SPEAKER: It would be just as well not to.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Fancy a person going to a chemist, purchasing chemicals and mixing them up for himself!

The Colonial Secretary: Quite an easy matter.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is not worth a minute's consideration. Nobody would do that. The Act prohibits a chemist from supplying such medicine without the permission of the Commissioner. Is the Minister neglecting that provision?

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Hon. P. Collier: How many prosecutions have there been?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Has the Minister proved that a large number of persons are going to chemists for these medicines?

The Colonial Secretary: I surmise it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister has no proof. He has not instituted one prosecution, which is *prima facie* evidence that his statement is groundless. The Act lays down clearly what action shall be taken by the department in such circumstances. This provision has not been availed of. The inference that chemists are breaking the law can be dismissed from mind without further consideration. There are one or two other matters in the Bill worthy of consideration. It is not the first time that Government departments have tried to take charge of public buildings, sometimes successfully. Recently the Perth Town Hall was engaged for a ball, and the Act was complied with. It was found that the hall offered insufficient accommodation and St. George's Hall or some other hall was engaged for a supper room. Owing to some misunderstanding those responsible neglected to notify the Commissioner of Public Health that they intended to instal certain electric wires in St. George's Hall. Of course the health inspectors had to show that they were doing something; so they immediately brought up the person responsible, and got him fined for not

giving notice of intention to alter the electric lighting arrangements. However, in by far the greatest portion of Western Australia the men who are called upon to inspect public halls are the local health inspectors, and not the Government health inspectors. If I had my way I would reduce the number of Government inspectors. Certainly I would not introduce into a measure like this such a paltry clause as an excuse for retaining inspectors who are not required. The Government have been cunning in this matter. They do not wish the clause to apply to all halls throughout the State, because then our friends on the cross benches would be against it, and would vote the provision out.

Hon. P. Collier: No; the clause does not apply to agricultural halls.

The Colonial Secretary: It is not necessary to apply the provision to small buildings, but only to large buildings; and that is the intention.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister said within himself, "If I do not exclude agricultural halls, I shall not be able to pass this clause and so obtain a little more money to pay health inspectors who are not required to-day."

Mr. MacCallum Smith: But you do not suggest that the members of the Country Party would lend themselves to such a proceeding?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I say that the Country Party will never vote for anything that will cost their constituents a penny.

Mr. A. Thomson: What has that got to do with the Bill?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Bill exempts agricultural halls in the country from inspection.

Mr. Johnston: They ought to be exempt. Surely the hon. gentleman approves of that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I intend to vote against the clause altogether, as I voted against a similar clause two or three years ago. This thing has been attempted before. A clause similar in principle, if not worded exactly like this one, was struck out two or three years ago. Let hon. members ask themselves whether it is necessary that the Perth health inspectors should inspect amusement halls in Fremantle or in Kalgoorlie? Is it necessary to pass a clause imposing fees for that purpose? Should not the local authorities of Fremantle or Kalgoorlie, or any other centre, do the work and receive the fees? The intention is to send the Perth health inspectors all over the State to make annual inspections at a cost of £5 per inspection. Parliament refused to ratify a similar provision some years ago. We ask for decentralisation. The Country Party demand decentralisation. I know that, generally speaking, decentralisation of the kind desired by hon. members is not possible. But in this particular instance decentralisation is possible, because, except as regards one or two elderly inspectors appointed prior

to the passing of the Health Act, the inspectors in the country are qualified and certificated in exactly the same way as the Government health inspectors. If the clause passes, the Minister will put in a minute the next morning, "We have to inspect halls of amusement now and we must appoint the necessary additional inspectors."

The Colonial Secretary: We inspect the halls now.

Mr. O'Loughlen: But do you send inspectors to Albany?

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You would have to do it if this clause passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes; and the fee would be £5 to £10, according to the size of the hall.

Mr. Money: Who is asking for this clause?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The officers concerned. In my opinion, the appointment of an official to inspect country halls would involve more expenditure than the total of the fees to be collected, and the Consolidated Revenue would have to make up the balance. The clause is ridiculous, and should be deleted. Indeed, I almost hope that the entire Bill will be thrown out. However, there is just one provision in it which I favour. I tried to get Parliament to enact such a provision in 1913 or 1914, but it was rejected by the Legislative Council, I believe at the instance of various nurses. To me it has always seemed ridiculous that while a young girl desirous of qualifying as a maternity nurse, goes into a hospital for twelve months' training, a qualified nurse desirous of nursing maternity cases is in this respect put on exactly the same footing as that young girl, and is required to undergo the same period of training in a maternity hospital. It is now proposed that a certificated nurse need only put in six months' training in maternity work. Indeed, I understand that the existing provision has never been carried out. The Minister told me the other night that it had been, but I say it never has been. Just after the opening of the King Edward Memorial Hospital I learnt that several soldiers' widows desired to be trained as maternity nurses. Very few of them were able to get into the King Edward Memorial Hospital, the only training institution of the kind in the metropolitan area, or perhaps in the State. Possibly Kalgoorlie hospital also affords training in maternity nursing. A nurse must go through such an institution in order to obtain a certificate. Some of the soldiers' widows who could not get into the King Edward Memorial Hospital had families and were desirous of making some money in order that they might be able to devote their pensions to the proper maintenance of their children. I interviewed the Commissioner of Public Health in regard to the matter, and he said to me, "One or two have just gone into the King Edward Memorial Hospital for training, and so there

should be a vacancy or two in six months." "But," I said, "under the Act they must remain there for 12 months." The Commissioner replied, "Oh no, we keep them there only six months." I said nothing, because I thought the practice was quite right, although contrary to law. The clause in question is the only clause in this Bill that is worth passing. By rejecting every other clause of the measure we shall be doing good for the community. By passing that one clause we shall be benefiting the nurses, and also those throughout the State who are in need of maternity nurses. I trust hon. members will show respect for the liberty of the subject by refusing to enact that provision of the Bill which would prevent a person against whom a malicious charge is made, from suing for damages and from demanding the name of the person who made the charge. The licensing of halls is a matter for the local authorities, because the local authorities have inspectors to carry out the work without cost to the State. The provision relating to maternity nurses is the only important and beneficial feature of the Bill. The principal clause of the Bill I trust will be struck out entirely.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [5.43]: I took note of the last speaker's statement that any member who desired that a woman should be taken away to be examined on the strength of an unsigned statement would support the Bill, and that any member who did not desire this would vote against the Bill. I have read the section controlling the matter, and I fail to find in it any reference to an unsigned statement. The section states—

When the Commissioner has reason to believe that any person is suffering from any venereal disease, he may give notice in writing to such person requiring him to consult a medical practitioner, and to produce to the satisfaction of the Commissioner—

and so on. That section makes no reference to an unsigned statement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But read the lines struck out, which will come into force if this Bill is carried.

Mr. MANN: So far as I see, that does not affect the position.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It affects the whole position.

Mr. MANN: I have in mind a case such as this: If a male person suffering from venereal disease consulted a medical man, the medical man might question him as to how he had become infected. The patient might or might not inform the medical man as to the source of infection. If he did inform the doctor, then the latter, in reporting the case to the Commissioner of Public Health, might state, "I treated Thomas Jones for a venereal disease, and he has informed me that he was infected at a certain house by a certain woman." Thereupon, I take it, the Commissioner's duty would be to make careful and discreet inquiries into the pa-

tient's allegation. The member for North-East Fremantle says that under such a clause no woman would be safe. But surely a man holding the position of Public Health Commissioner for Western Australia would take every precaution to satisfy himself beyond all reasonable doubt of the truth of the allegation before issuing instructions for a medical examination of the woman. Before reading the Bill I thought it was possible, and that the Act was so worded, that it was imperative upon the Commissioner of Public Health to make a person submit himself for examination as soon as the unsigned statement had been received.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you suggest that you, of all men in this Chamber, would think that?

Mr. MANN: I thought it was imperative—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Bunkum! You never thought anything of the kind!

Mr. MANN: I thought that the Commissioner would act immediately on receipt of an unsigned statement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You thought nothing of the kind!

Mr. MANN: One would have thought that that was the position after hearing the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). That was the position which he was endeavouring to put before hon. members, but I find it is not the case. It seems to me that the member for North-East Fremantle was fighting a very bad case because he certainly endeavoured to make members believe that that was the position.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Those conditions do prevail.

Mr. MANN: The hon. member first says that it does not prevail and then he says that it does prevail. I am inclined to liken this matter to a criminal case where a crime has been committed. It may be a case of murder or an offence of a more or less serious nature. Some person may come along and give certain information to a police officer. That individual would not say, "Jones committed that crime." He would simply give certain information to the officer, who would have to thoroughly investigate it and when he believed he was able to satisfy a justice that Jones had committed the offence, or was in possession of certain stolen property, and so on, the officer would make representations to the magistrate that Jones had committed that offence. At that stage the magistrate would issue a search warrant, or a summons, or a warrant for arrest, as the case might be. But the magistrate has to be satisfied that there is reasonable ground for issuing the warrant. No magistrate would issue a warrant on the bare statement that someone had done something. In the case under review, the Commissioner of Public Health is the magistrate and he has to be satisfied. So satisfied has he to be, and so careful has he been in administering this Act, that there has not been one complaint by any person of having been wrongfully charged or at-

tacked under this section. I can give many instances during the 20 years I was connected with the Police Department where invaluable information was put into the hands of the police by means of an unsigned note from a person who did not desire his name to be divulged. That information would not be acted upon without strong corroboration. The police officer would have to satisfy himself to such an extent that he felt he could, in turn, satisfy the magistrate that the facts to be placed before him were correct.

Mr. Sampson: How could that happen under the Bill?

Mr. MANN: Certain information reaches the Commissioner of Public Health and the Commissioner at once makes such inquiries as will enable him, acting in the capacity of a police magistrate, to satisfy himself that a case has been made out which necessitates action. He will then issue a notice asking the person to submit himself or herself for examination. I may relate a case which came under my notice as a police officer. One morning a gentleman came into my office and he showed me a notice which had come to his house addressed to his daughter. The gentleman had come into possession of that note by accident. It was a notice instructing his daughter to submit herself for examination. His feelings were indescribable. Up to that time, he had had no reason to suspect that his daughter was living a loose life. I discussed the position with him and told him that if he liked to let the matter stand over for a day, I would have careful inquiries made to ascertain something about the position. I did so and I found that certain officers knew the daughter well and the places she frequented. I sent for the father and I told him that it was in the interests of his daughter that she should be examined. I suggested that he should have her examined by the family's medical practitioner, on the result of which he could arrive at his own decision. That was done and his daughter was found to be suffering from this disease in a very bad form. In that case, I think the Commissioner did make very careful and discreet inquiries. He was so satisfied that he sent a notice to that particular young woman. The majority of her sex will endeavour to hide these things more than a man. If a man becomes infected, he will consult a "pal" as to what is the best course to be taken, where to consult a doctor or chemist who is used to dealing with such cases, and so on. He may go to a doctor, who will report the case to the Commissioner, or he may go to a chemist or herbalist, who will not report the matter to the commissioner.

Mr. Davies: They are not allowed to treat those cases.

Mr. MANN: No, because it is illegal for them to treat them and that is the reason why they will not send in a report. There are many men, however, who are making a

good living by treating patients suffering from this disease.

Hon. P. Collier: There have been no prosecutions. The Police Department should have been able to track them down.

Mr. MANN: I will not suggest how evidence can be got to support prosecutions in such cases.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member would be able to get that evidence all right.

Mr. MANN: In the case of a woman she does not act as a man. She does not consult her best "pal," her parents or anyone else. She hides her trouble and so she suffers and others may suffer as the result. It may be that this clause can be amended so as to provide for greater precautions being taken, but I think it is very essential that we should retain it. Knowing as I do the necessity for examinations, I think members would be acting wrongly if they do not agree to re-enact this particular part of the Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I am not dealing with the examination but I say the person making the charge should sign his name to it.

Mr. Underwood: There is no charge.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is the same thing; there is no difference.

Mr. MANN: It is not necessary for a person to lay a charge at all. It may be that some man would be enraged at becoming infected and would send names into the department. I am sure, however, that no officer, particularly an officer such as the Commissioner of Public Health, would, simply because he had received an unsigned statement of that nature, cause the persons concerned to be examined. I am certain that he would take every precaution. He would cause inquiries to be made as to the life the person concerned was leading, her social position and whether the life she was leading was likely to bring her into contact with this disease.

Hon. P. Collier: In that case, he must call in the assistance of the police.

Mr. Underwood: It only says "when the Commissioner has reasonable ground for believing."

Mr. MANN: During my period of service as a police officer, I can only say my services were never called into requisition for such a purpose. I do not know what means the Commissioner would adopt to carry out his investigations.

Hon. P. Collier: I should think that, as he has no suitable staff, he would have to call in the assistance of the police.

Mr. MANN: I am satisfied that the Commissioner would make careful and discreet inquiries.

Hon. T. Walker: That is mere supposition.

Mr. MANN: It is not. It is borne out by facts.

Hon. T. Walker: What facts?

Mr. MANN: That there have been no complaints.

Hon. T. Walker: This is one of those things that people would not complain about for the very shame of it.

Mr. MANN: There is no question of shame.

Hon. P. Collier: The very fact that a person was suspected, would be sufficient to cause him or her shame.

Mr. MANN: I am so convinced of the necessity for the examination that I think the House would be making a grave mistake if members did not agree to re-enact the clause. I am unable to see any of the disadvantages that the member for North-East Fremantle has put before the House. I cannot see anything about the unsigned statement in the Bill. I am only able to see that the Commissioner has to be satisfied.

Hon. T. Walker: Look at Clause 2. At the end of that clause there is a provision that sets out that Section 256 shall be—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to read a clause during the second reading debate on a Bill.

Hon. T. Walker: I am perfectly in order. The member for Perth says he cannot see such a provision and I draw his attention to where it exists.

Mr. MANN: I would like to give the House another instance to show the necessity for the retention of this clause. It may almost appear to hon. members that I am drawing the long bow when I say that I was summoned to the Perth Public Hospital and there saw a lady with a boy who was 12 years of age. The boy was suffering from syphilis contracted in the anus. Hon. members will probably have thought that that was impossible. I questioned the lad with a view to ascertaining the source of infection. I found that his statements were too unreliable. He mentioned the names of persons who had committed unnatural offences upon him. When I discussed the matter with his mother she said that I could not believe the lad because one of the persons to whom he had referred was only two years of age when they left the district. When I found that the first part of his statement was so untrue, I did not place any reliance upon his statement as a whole. I take it that the Commissioner of Public Health would act in a similar manner. If he found that certain statements were not reliable, he would take no further action in the matter. The Commissioner would have to more than satisfy himself before he would ask a person to present himself or herself for examination. I can give the House case after case and could speak for over an hour giving illustrations to show the necessity for the measure. The point, however, is: Is there any injustice likely to arise from the application of Section 256? To my mind, there is not.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [6.0]: The fact that this Bill has come in in its present form says a great deal for the pertinacity and persistence of some of the officials of the Public Health Department. There seems to be someone in that department determined to get control of all the places of entertainment in the coun-

try districts, as well as in other parts of the State.

Hon. T. Walker: And in the towns.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That person seems determined to prevent harmless amusement from being carried on in those houses of entertainment and public halls unless they have first been registered, approved, and inspected by someone in Perth and a heavy fee paid. This proposal is quite a familiar one. We have had it before from the department, and, when we did have it before, I am pleased to say that the present Premier, the Colonial Secretary, and the Minister for Agriculture, were amongst those who ridiculed it and voted against it, and threw it out. I hope those hon. gentlemen will take the same action on this occasion that they took then in regard to a similar proposal. When the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) introduced a measure of this kind in 1918, the Colonial Secretary voted to throw it out.

The Colonial Secretary: I was not in the House in 1918.

Mr. JOHNSTON: He was in the House on the 16th April, 1918, and his vote is recorded in "Hansard" in opposition to the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: It is astonishing how the officials have got hold of you now.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I will repeat to the Colonial Secretary what the Premier said at that time, and I have nothing further to say than to confirm what he said. The Premier said—

The work being done by the local authority is to be taken over by the central authority, or, worse still, the work is to be duplicated.

That is what is proposed again to-day. We have our local inspectors, and yet under this measure it is proposed to send out officials from Perth, at a cost of £10 a year, to see that the building in which the local health inspector works all the time is in a fit and proper condition. In the Narrogin Town Hall we have a qualified health inspector, and yet an official is to be sent from Perth to inspect that building.

The Colonial Secretary: Is it on Crown land?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not know whether the council have been given the freehold or not.

The Colonial Secretary: Why do you complain about the Narrogin Town Hall coming under the provisions of this Bill?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Because it is a town hall. The Bill does not exempt town halls and road board halls. It only exempts agricultural halls or mechanics' institutes or workers' halls. Private halls, road board halls, town halls and churches come under the provisions of the measure. I object to that principle. If a man has built a fine private hall at Northam, or

elsewhere, why should he not be allowed to run it subject to inspection by the local health inspector? There are qualified health inspectors in most of these towns. I hope the Colonial Secretary will not argue against the views he voted for in company with the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture in 1918.

Hon. P. Collier: Continue that argument; it is a good one.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Premier continued—

This duplication seems to me unwise. The power of the local authority should be increased rather than decreased. If the Minister says this is a tax on amusements, I say it is altogether a ridiculous tax.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: It is for the work of inspecting halls and seeing that they are kept in order.

Hon. P. Collier: He was under the influence of the officials then.

Mr. JOHNSTON: "Hansard" continues—

Hon. J. Mitchell: The local authority should be in every way protected and encouraged, and should have full responsibility for the management of affairs within their boundary. If a hall not ordinarily used for public entertainments is required for a dance it will be necessary to send to Perth for registration of that hall, or if a billiard room at Doodlakine is to be used for a patriotic concert, the apartment must first be registered.

The member for Mt. Magnet altogether opposed this clause. I find that it went to a division and that amongst those who voted for the striking out of the section were—Mr. Brown, Mr. Maley, and Mr. Mitchell. The vote was on the particular part of the section concerning this registration form, the payment of a fee of £10, and the amendment to the clause was passed by 24 Ayes to 11 Noes. I voted with the Colonial Secretary on that occasion, and I hope he will vote with me on this occasion. The clause as amended was defeated by the Committee, unanimously. I urge the Minister to take the same view now that he took then, a view that his colleagues supported him in, and that he will not put upon the people in the State the unnecessary burden of paying from £5 to £10 a year by way of fees to the Government for this inspection, merely because a hall is called a road board hall or a municipal hall, instead of an agricultural hall. If an agricultural hall is erected on Crown land it is exempt, but if the land happens to be freehold land, even if it belongs to some local authority, under the clause I refer to, these fees must be paid. I am sorry the clause was introduced, and I hope the Government will see their way to having it struck out.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [6.7]: This Bill contains two or three varied and very widely removed propositions. The member for Williams-Narrogin makes a very grave charge against the Bill with regard to mechanics' institutes.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He made a very effective speech.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: His complaint had reference to the buildings. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) spoke for some considerable time and pointed out what happened in human nature, and what will continue to happen until the stars melt away. A wise judge has referred to the man who fools about with women. Men are going to fool about with women until this planet hits the sun, and the whole lot of us make a bit of fuel with which to light some other part of the world. It would have been better to have debated both the clauses referred to by previous speakers, in Committee, the clause dealing with venereal disease, and the clause dealing with the subject mentioned by the member for Williams-Narrogin. I, therefore, ask members to pass the second reading of this Bill.

Hon. T. Walker: There is a big principle involved.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. What principle?

Hon. T. Walker: The principle of human liberty.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The principle of human liberty! There is no reason why members cannot deal with the principle of human liberty in Committee, just as readily as it can be dealt with in the House. Human liberty can be protected and has been protected in many ways, and there is no reason why it should not be protected in Committee.

Hon. T. Walker: You deal with the principles of a Bill on the second reading.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Members can please themselves. You can deal with it in Committee, if you like.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Quite so. Being a trained workman, I do not like doing things twice over. I do not care to do a job once and have to do it again. If we go on with the second reading, and then in Committee have to go over the whole thing again, it is not a good workmanlike way of doing things.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That might apply to all Bills.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Not to all.

Hon. T. Walker: Of course it does.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: This is entirely a Committee Bill, and it would be preferable that those who are opposing certain clauses should deal with them in Committee. Our object in passing the second reading of the Bill now would be to deal with the various propositions contained in it in Committee. Since members, however, have taken up a position, as they are justly entitled to do, and are determined to debate the Bill on the second reading, and if we are compelled to accept that position, I am prepared to discuss the clauses mentioned. I listened care-

fully to the speech of the member for North-East Fremantle.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not intend to speak at great length on the second reading of the Bill. I trust hon. members will pass the second reading, and then we can deal with the various clauses in Committee. But let me just say a few words in reply to the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). That hon. member said a good deal of this legislation was due to exaggeration on the part of medical men. But that statement is totally incorrect. Some medical men have given a great deal of assistance towards endeavouring to eradicate venereal disease, and there has been no exaggeration whatever on their part. The member for North-East Fremantle further stated that this legislation had been brought about in this State by panic. Our legislation, however, was introduced when there was no panic whatever. It is no pleasure to me to speak, I have an aversion to speaking, on this subject. But I have seen the effects of venereal disease from my boyhood. That is no credit to me and no discredit to me; but seen it I have, and I would be less than a man did I not try to do something towards its eradication. Having studied the subject as far as lies within my scope, I have come to the conclusion that the eradication of the disease from the human family is possible. If we can eradicate it, we shall have accomplished something worth doing. The member for North-East Fremantle speaks of the liberty of the subject. In that respect there is very little difference between him and myself. I do not know that he is a greater lover of liberty than I am. I do not know that he would put up any bigger fight for liberty than I would. I know that neither of us would for a single instant oppress anybody. We would not oppress any human being whatsoever. But I think the hon. member fails to realise what is sought to be achieved by this legislation. The aim is not to take away the liberty of anybody, but to eradicate a very dangerous disease. That is all we desire to do by this legislation. When the hon. member speaks of the panic of medical men, I assure him, and I also assure the House, that I have formed my opinions not from the observations of medical men but from my own personal observation. We know what the poet says about pining away and dying. But, as regards this disease, I have seen men rot away and die. Should we not try to find a remedy for a state of affairs rendering such things possible? I have previously spoken, and do not again desire to speak, on the subject of the syphilitic child. That goes. But when one comes to think how the disease is contracted, one must bear in mind that men are no better than the author of them. I suppose there is not a man in this world who

morally is any better than he ought to be; but there are very few of us who are worse than nature intended us to be. Now as regards the Principal Medical Officer and the proposition before us. There is no question of evidence or of accusation, but when the Commissioner of Public Health has reasonable grounds for believing, he takes steps to do what? To eradicate disease. One may speak as long as one pleases about false accusations and that sort of thing; but there is no such thing either in the clause or in the Bill as an accusation. The measure says, "When the Principal Medical Officer has reasonable grounds for believing." I will not even mention the present Principal Medical Officer; but I ask, are we likely to get a sexual maniac as Principal Medical Officer?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What reasonable grounds would he expect?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Such as appealed to his reason.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know very well what reasonable grounds he would accept.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Since the hon. member forces me to speak, let me say that a man who, just for the joy of doing it, would bring up an innocent girl or young woman and examine her—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There has been plenty of that in England, and without reasonable grounds.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I say that such a man would be a sexual maniac. However, what I want to put before the House is this: There is no suggestion or question whatever about our present Principal Medical Officer. But are we ever likely to get a sexual maniac as our Principal Medical Officer? I say we are not. We have at the present time, and I think we shall always have, in that position a man desirous of eradicating disease from among the people.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If a man is suffering from a disease and reports that he got it from a certain girl, whether he got it from her or not, that is good reason under the clause, without any signed statement whatever.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: To begin with, the man has to have the disease. Now, he must have got it somewhere. He did not pick it up on his own. The Principal Medical Officer would make most careful inquiries, prior to taking action, with regard to the character of the man who made the charge. Undoubtedly he would. He would not accept the word of the man without challenge, and he has means for inquiring into the character and reliability of the man.

Hon. T. Walker: What means?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: All the means afforded by the Government of this country.

Hon. T. Walker: No.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes.

Hon. T. Walker: Specify some of them.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He has his health inspectors. He can get into communication, if necessary, with the Commissioner of Police.

Hon. T. Walker: Ah!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Does the hon. member think that a man or a woman known to the police to be spreading disease should not be prevented from spreading it? Where does the "Ah" come in?

Hon. T. Walker: All right, if you are going to employ the police in the matter!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: No, not that; but I say the Principal Medical Officer has, and should have, the whole of the functions of Government at his disposal. It is hardly necessary to go further into the question. The member for North-East Fremantle has most certainly not put up any case whatever; he has not shown where even one person has been deprived of liberty.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There were six persons who had to go up for examination on the strength of the unsigned statement.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not know that the results were negative.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Minister said so.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If the hon. member looked into these cases he would find that the results were not altogether negative, but rather in the category of "not proven." Suppose these six women had been compulsorily examined and they were not suffering from venereal disease and that there was no reason why they should have been suffering from venereal disease, I still say, as I stated on the previous occasion, that it were better to examine 50 clean women, than to bring into the world one syphilitic child. After all, the worst we are trying to do to-day—if some hon. members regard it as the "worst"—is to wipe out a very dangerous disease.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Continuation temporarily of Section 256:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some hon. members, more particularly the member for Perth, have contended that the clause has nothing whatever to do with the question of the signed statement. When the Act was passed in 1915 it contained these words—

Whenever the Commissioner has received a signed statement, in which shall be set forth the full name and address of the informant, stating that any person is suffering from venereal diseases, and whenever the Commissioner has reason to believe that such person is suffering from such disease—

These words were struck out in 1918 for a period of 12 months, and the following words were inserted in lieu—

Whenever the Commissioner has reason to believe that any person is suffering from any venereal disease.

If the Committee decide against the clause now before us, the first provision which I have read will again become the law, making compulsory the signed statement regarding information that is received by the Commissioner. Prior to 1918 a person, if suffering from this disease, could say that he got it from a woman without giving any signed statement to that effect. It is all very well for hon. members to say that we have good officers who may be trusted. I am not going to deny that we have good officers. It is also all very well to say that instances cannot be brought forward to indicate where the power has been abused. We have clear proof, however, that the existing Act has only been used during the past five or six years with regard to women. Up to the 27th October, 1920, only 40 cases had been reported under this section, and all of them related to women. The member for Pilbara knows full well that when a question is asked in the House, it goes direct to the official concerned and does not reach the Minister until the answer is put up. In the circumstances, I can only assume that the answer given by the Minister to Mr. Dodd in the Legislative Council was put up by the Commissioner himself. In all probability, each woman concerned in those 40 cases was asked to submit herself for medical examination. The women are allowed to choose their own medical officers and very rightly so. It is said that these women submit themselves to examination voluntarily. Why? When they are served with their notice under the section of the Health Act they are notified regarding the provisions of that measure and they know that unless they voluntarily submit themselves, the Commissioner has power to call in the police to assist him to enforce the law. They go voluntarily so as to avoid the indignity of arrest. Stress has been laid on the phrase: "The Commissioner has reason to believe." We know that all men are not angels. In England many an innocent girl has been run in and submitted to examination because of such a provision.

Mr. Underwood: They never had a law like this in England.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Pilbara contends there is no compulsion, and that the Commissioner will only act after he has reason to believe that an inquiry is necessary. Take the case of a man who is suffering from venereal diseases. He has a spite against some other individual. He goes to a doctor and when the doctor questions him, he may give the name of that person's daughter, if he so desires. In such a case, has not the Commissioner reason to believe that the information is correct, seeing that the man is suffering from the disease?

Mr. Money: The same contention applies to every offence under the sun.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Probably the hon. member does not desire to hear the truth. In the case I mention, the individual who makes the report does not sign any statement. The allegation is made confidentially

to the Commissioner, and no action can be taken subsequently if the individual has made a malicious and unjust charge.

Mr. Money: You are assuming that every man will do wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We must assume that; the power is contained in the section.

Hon. T. Walker: Every law assumes that man does wrong.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is useless to say that this is all right and that no one would adopt an unjust course of action in view of the Ministerial statement regarding the six women who have been examined. It is not known generally that to-day our sisters, wives and daughters may be brought under this clause.

Mr. Money: You are only assuming that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I say this is not generally known. The member for Bunbury never told his constituents that such a provision was contained in the Health Act. He knows his constituents would be up in arms against it. If the clause does not pass to-night, what is the position? Parliament realised the danger of this provision when it was passed.

Mr. A. Thomson: Has it been abused?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Six women have been brought under it; I do not know whether that is abuse of the law or not. In view of the possibility of abuse, however, a condition was added to the section making it necessary for the clause to be re-enacted every 12 months. From 1918 till now, it has been found necessary to introduce legislation to continue the section. If the clause be not passed, every person who makes a charge of this kind will have to sign it. Then, when a false charge is made, the person charged will be able to go to the Commissioner, prove that he or she is clean, demand the name of the person who laid the charge, and forthwith bring an action against that person in a court of law. We are told it is necessary that this provision should be included; yet the Minister tells us that under the clause only two cases were reported last year! However, it is the principle of the unsigned statement to which I am objecting.

Mr. Underwood: There is nothing in the Bill about a false charge.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, but the hon. member knows that if the clause be not passed, the provision for the signed statement will come into operation. I ask hon. members to deprive scoundrels of the opportunity for making malicious charges.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I move an amendment—

That after "statutes" in line 5 "are hereby made perpetual" be inserted.

The object of this is to make the clause permanent. It does not seem right that we should have to confirm it every year. I should have preferred to move to strike out the clause and insert that which this House passed in 1916. That clause was defeated in another place, not on its merits but as a

move in wretched party politics. Those who, in another place, desired to defeat the Scaddan Government, defeated the clause as a means of securing their end. Three or four of those who voted for the rejection of the clause and the insertion of the subterfuge of the signed statement are now supporting the original clause. The desire of those in another place who voted against the original clause was, not the defence of the liberties of the people, but the defeat of the Scaddan Government. It is time we either struck out this clause or made it permanent.

Point of Order.

Hon. P. Collier: On a point of order: I submit the amendment is not in order. It is not competent for us to legislate in perpetuity. We cannot pass legislation which would deprive any future Parliament of its right of amendment. To say that the clause shall be enacted and be perpetual, is to say that it shall remain for all time.

Hon. T. Walker: The point is a good one. We cannot legislate for all time.

Mr. Underwood: We have done it.

Hon. T. Walker: We cannot make a law perpetual. We cannot stultify future Parliaments. It would be reducing legislation to an absurdity. All we can do is to pass laws which, until amended, shall remain in continuity. That is the characteristic of every law placed on the statute-book, unless its duration be specifically limited.

Mr. Underwood: We have done it.

The Chairman: For the sake of argument, Mr. Walker, do you mean to convey that at the next session Parliament could not repeat that amendment?

Hon. T. Walker: No; I mean to say it could, and that therefore the word "perpetual" is absurd. If Parliament next session struck out the word "perpetual," it would show how stupid we had made ourselves by agreeing to the amendment; and it is against the traditions of this Chamber that we should do anything stupid.

Mr. Underwood: The clause as it stands is exceedingly stupid. Every Act of Parliament is amendable by Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition says we cannot make any law perpetual. Listen to this from one of our Acts of Parliament: "There shall be from henceforth forever in the State of Western Australia a University." We passed that, and we can repeal that.

Hon. T. Walker: Undoubtedly.

Mr. Underwood: And we can repeal this amendment which I have moved. My desire is to get this clause put into the Act as an ordinary provision. If my meaning can be conveyed in a better way, let us have it, but I do not desire to have this provision made permanent in the Act.

Hon. P. Collier: It is not a question of your desire. You may desire to do many things which are not in order.

Mr. Underwood: The hon. member might rise to a point of order merely for the sake of opposing me. I desire to see this provision

made permanent, so far as any of our legislation is permanent, or struck out altogether. If members think that some word other than "permanent" or "perpetual" would be more appropriate, I shall be prepared to accept it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The insertion of these words will not repeal the provision in the Act at the present time, and therefore there will be a contradiction. The present clause also stipulates a certain date.

Hon. T. Walker: By way of personal explanation, I wish to mention that the Act creating the University is a conveyance, nothing more or less.

The Chairman: Regarding the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition, could not a similar objection be raised against the words in the existing provision "shall continue until the 31st December, 1921"? Could not Parliament in June, 1921, have repealed it?

Mr. Johnston: Of course.

Hon. T. Walker: There is a difference between a limitation and an eternity. The stupidity of legislating for eternity!

Mr. Money: It is provided that the provision shall not continue longer than the 31st December, but Parliament has continued it.

Hon. T. Walker: Parliament has resurrected it.

The Chairman: I rule that the Committee is competent to consider the amendment as moved by the member for Pilbara. I cannot see that I should reject it on the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

Committee resumed.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	26
Majority against				11

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Boyland	Mr. Richardson
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Davies	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harriison	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Mann	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. C. C. Maley
Mr. Broun	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Carter	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Denton	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Durack	Mr. Sampson
Mr. George	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Gibson	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Heron	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Latham	(Teller.)
Mr. Lutey	

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. MONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 "1922" be struck out with a view to inserting "1924."

No evidence has been adduced that the provision is working injuriously; rather does the evidence show that it is working well. This Parliament has been recently elected and we do not want to have to discuss this question each year. My amendment would lead to the saving of time and obviate the recurrence of a discussion which is not very nice.

Amendment put and a division called for.

Mr. A. Thomson: The member for West Perth rose to speak before you rang the bells.

The CHAIRMAN: I did not see her.

Mrs. Cowan: I was on my feet trying to catch your eye.

Mr. Mann: She was standing all the time.

The CHAIRMAN: I did not see her, and she did not speak. It is too late for her to speak now.

Mrs. Cowan: I did speak.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	26

Majority against .. 11

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Boyland	Mr. Richardson
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Davies	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Mann	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. C. C. Maley
Mr. Broun	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Carter	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Denton	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Durack	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Latham	(Teller.)
Mr. Lutey	

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	..	21

Majority against .. 1

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mann
Mr. Boyland	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Davies	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Durack	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Underwood
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Mullany
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. C. C. Maley
Mr. Carter	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Denton	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Gibson	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Heron	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Latham	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

Clause thus negatived.

Mr. Underwood: That will do you a lot of good.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have protected the women, anyhow.

Mrs. Cowan: I am out to protect the women every time, but in the right way, and this will not do it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Insertion of new Section between Sections 144 and 148:

Mr. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment—

That proposed Subsection 1 be struck out.

The Minister for Works: Why?

Mr. JOHNSTON: If we are going to have the clause at all I want to see that it is amended so that we get the exemption that was contained in the Act some three years ago.

Hon. P. Collier: The whole clause will go out.

Mr. JOHNSTON: To-day the exemptions only apply to agricultural halls, mechanics' institutes, or workers' halls erected on Crown land. My object is to ensure that these halls shall be exempted as was provided three years ago.

Hon. P. Collier: Take a test vote on the proposed new Subsection 1.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would point out that churches and other buildings belonging to religious bodies were exempt.

The Colonial Secretary: Churches are exempt now.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Seeing that the clause we are dealing with omits any reference to churches, I cannot accept the assurance that they are exempt.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amend-

ment. Members are continually saying that the Government should economise, and one of the objects of this clause is to assist us in doing that.

Mr. Johnston: Put on an amusement tax.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We can hardly do that while we have the heavy amusement tax imposed by the Federal authorities. I deny the statement that the clause will mean the employment of other officers. Five inspectors do all the work of the metropolitan area, the gold-fields and the country districts. These buildings are already inspected, and the plans of any new building have to be submitted to the department before the buildings are constructed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And a fee has to be paid.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: An officer of the department has to see that the building is safe before it is opened. All alterations have also to be inspected.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The underwriters see to that. There is no necessity for these inspections.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If anything happens in a building the Government are responsible.

Hon. T. Walker: You can do all that without this clause.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, but we cannot impose fees. Why should our inspectors continue to do this work for nothing? We want to impose a small fee in order to pay for the services of our inspectors.

Hon. T. Walker: It is another form of taxation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is only in connection with halls. The buildings are mainly large ones. The inspectors do not inspect every hall in every country town, but only those which have to be registered. When the Government attempt to obtain revenue in a legitimate manner without imposing any hardship on the people they are howled down. These buildings are used for amusement purposes and the people should pay a small tax upon them. I am only asking for payment for services rendered.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is no work done.

Mr. MONEY: After hearing the remarks of the Colonial Secretary, I am satisfied that the fee is merely required in payment for services rendered. There is nothing suggestive of the employment of further inspectors, or of more frequent inspections. I should like to see the fees fixed at such a rate that they will pay for the administration of the department. Here is an opportunity of helping the finances. We are overburdened with departments.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I said definitely just now there is no necessity for these inspections.

The Colonial Secretary: There is.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Every road board, health board and municipality employs a certificated inspector, and the people of the district have to pay for their services.

The Colonial Secretary: Not for this purpose.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is the duty of the health board to see that every place is properly conducted. It is a waste of money for the Government to send out men to see whether some privy has been properly built or not. The Health Department knows as much about halls as halls do about it. The Public Works Department do the work and the Health Department collects the fees. Charges are already made for plans that are sent in for inspection. But the full charge, meeting all expenses, does not satisfy the Government. Every plan of every new building has to be inspected, and such inspection has to be paid for; and similarly in the case of any addition to an existing building. It would be a jolly sight better if inspection of halls were taken away from the Health Department, and given to the Public Works Department, who do understand the subject. Under this clause a Public Health Department inspector might go to Bunbury to inspect a hall upon its completion, for which a fee of £10 might be charged, and then the inspector might never see the hall again, though the owners of the hall would have to pay an annual registration fee of possibly £10. The local health inspector visits the local hall almost every day, and yet the Minister wants to send an inspector from Perth to visit the hall, and wants to charge a fee of £5 or £10 therefor, or else charge a fee of like amount for the mere annual registration. As regards electricity, how long is it since the Government inspector inspected the electrical appliances in public halls? Has he done it for the underwriters without fee? In 1913 the underwriters had a thoroughly competent man doing that work, which they caused to be done for their own safety. Now the Minister wants to impose a special fee for inspection of electrical appliances. All owners of public buildings are already paying to the underwriters the cost of inspection of all electric installations. The fees which the Bill seeks to impose belong really to the local authorities, and not to the Government at all. Relatively to our local authorities, our State Government are imitating the attitude of the Commonwealth Government towards the States: our State Government are trying to collect revenue in every quarter and from every direction, and to throw all the work and all the responsibility on the local authorities. I hope the clause will be struck out.

Mr. SAMPSON: Proposed Subsection 2, in this clause, prohibits the use of any public building as a place of entertainment unless it is registered under the subsection; but agricultural halls, mechanics' institutes, and workers' institutes, if erected on Crown

lands, are exempted from the fees. If the object of the clause were to raise revenue, there would be something to commend it; but its purpose is to ensure the safety of those using public halls, and accordingly there is no justification for it unless all halls are brought within its scope. Most local halls are vested in the local authorities; and so I ask, why the exempting proviso? In small centres of population the upkeep of the hall is a comparatively heavy expense. If inspection is necessary in such cases, the secretary of the local board of health can do it without fee.

Hon. T. Walker: It is part of his duty now.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes; but I will admit that it is frequently neglected. I hope the clause will be either amended or entirely deleted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The last speaker has struck a note which will, I think, appeal to the majority of the Committee. That is with regard to the exemption under proposed Subsection 2. I agree that all public halls should be looked after in such a way as to prevent the possibility of accidents causing death or personal injury. But the cost of inspections made for the safety of the public should be borne by the proprietors of the buildings. Halls, churches, and other public buildings have been the scenes of panic; and cases have been known where the means of exit have been inadequate, with resultant accidents and even deaths. As regards the functions of the Public Works Department in this connection, the work of my department is not to inspect or pass a building upon completion, that being the duty of the Health Department. I may add that the matter has formed the subject of discussion between the two departments, of which discussion the present arrangement is the outcome.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and negatived.

Clauses 5 to 8—agreed to.

Title:

The CHAIRMAN: In view of the alterations made in the Bill, it will be necessary to amend the title.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in the Title the words "continue the amendments enacted by Section 41 of the Health Act Amendment Act, 1918, and to" be struck out.

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

Bill reported with amendments, including an amendment to the Title.

BILL—STAMP.

Returned from the Council with requested amendments.

BILL—PERTH HEBREW CONGREGATION LANDS.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [9.3] in moving the second reading said: Hon. members will know that we do not make grants of lands to churches in the metropolitan area. In the earlier days, churches were given blocks of land. The Perth Hebrew Congregation holds Perth suburban lot 455, comprising a quarter of an acre, which is situated at Subiaco. It is held on a 99 years' lease. The members of that congregation do not intend to build at Subiaco. It will be remembered that the members of the Hebrew congregation have a synagogue in Perth. They desire to obtain a Crown grant in order that they may sell the Subiaco site. It is intended to expend the proceeds on the Perth synagogue. The Bill provides for the sale or mortgage of lands held by the congregation free of any trust to which they may be subject. At present, these grants are made subject to certain trusts. Other denominations have the power which it is sought to extend to the Perth Hebrew Congregation under the Bill. We brought in a similar measure in 1916 authorising the Roman Catholic Church to do what the Hebrew Congregation desire to do under this measure. For my part, I do not see why these churches should have these grants made to them, particularly if they desire later on to sell the land. In this case, however, seeing that we have already given this authority to other churches, I suppose no objection can be raised. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; The Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to sell, lease and mortgage lands:

Mr. McCALLUM: Does this power apply to the whole of the lands transferred to the Jewish church?

The Premier: Yes, and to any land they may buy in the future. It gives them power to sell land, subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council.

Mr. McCALLUM: Can the Premier inform the Committee if the site where the Fremantle synagogue was constructed still belongs to the Jewish congregation, or does it belong to the Federal Government, who used it as part of the Fremantle base hospital?

The PREMIER: If the Jewish congregation still own that site, the right to sell the land will be covered by this measure subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1921-22.

In Committee of Supply.

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

Department of Railways; Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister. (The Premier in charge of the Estimates.)

Vote—Railways, £2,596,342:

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [9.10]: Hon. members are aware that the railways throughout Australia have been in trouble during the last year or two. Each railway department in each State has been run at a loss. In Western Australia, apart from £144,000 for sinking fund, we lost £418,000, or a total of £558,000. In South Australia the railway system was responsible for a loss of £561,000; in Victoria the railways lost £651,000; in New South Wales, £577,000, and in Queensland £1,739,000. These losses are to some extent, and I think to a very large extent, due to the falling off in trade, which has resulted in smaller activities in connection with the railways. That is the position in Western Australia. Hon. members will understand that there has been a very considerable falling-off in what is the most profitable portion of the railway traffic, namely, the carriage of general merchandise. People have more or less gone on strike against purchasing more than they are compelled to, and the result has been disastrous to the railways. The tonnage has fallen off and the running costs have increased. The wages costs are considerably more than they were, and the cost of commodities necessary for the railway system has considerably increased. Necessary purchases for the railway requirements are considerable. We are constantly importing material and parts to keep the rolling stock in order, to keep our tracks in order, and generally to maintain the system adequately. Train mileage has not been run this year to the extent experienced in previous years, but, that notwithstanding, the losses were, as I have already shown, very considerable. It is anticipated that there will be an improvement this year. Although the figures for the first five months do not appear to be satisfactory, I anticipate that for the remainder of the year there will be a considerable increase in traffic. The earnings should average about £250,000 per month, as against £200,000 per month for the past five months. It is always so with the railways and it can easily be accounted for. Our harvest is shifted during the first six months of the year. We shall probably have something over 300,000 tons of wheat to shift, which is in itself a very considerable item of traffic. In addition to wheat, there will be the other crops—oats, hay, and so on. The indications, therefore, are that the revenue will be very much better than during the earlier portion of the

year. It is anticipated that the revenue will be £1,752,000 and that the expenditure will amount to £1,388,000. I think the revenue will be realised but there is no doubt about the expenditure—it will be reached all right. For the next three months, we anticipate a surplus of £350,000 over and above the expenditure, but that, of course, does not include interest and sinking fund. The rates were increased some time ago but not nearly to an extent that would cover the increased cost of running. There, again, something was lost, but the chief trouble has been that we have not had the traffic. It is true that the same conditions apply all over the States and no one can be blamed here. The Commissioner and his staff are working hard in their efforts to conduct our railways as well as possible. Time and again have I told the House that the deficit to be faced year by year is largely due to the loss on the railways and wholly due to the loss on public utilities. Those concerns providing trading conveniences for the public have brought about the whole of the deficit, the railways being mainly responsible. I do not know just how the position can be met. It does happen that we have a very considerable mileage under the control of the Commissioner, and that of that mileage a large proportion is on the goldfields. During the past 12 months the goldfields have not been working very actively. Of course there may be a revival at any time, but in the meantime the railways have to suffer loss. I do not know just how soon we can develop our primary industries sufficiently to provide the necessary traffic to make the railways pay, but I know that the only way to get out of our difficulties is to produce that traffic. During the past year we have endeavoured to increase cultivation, particularly in the South-West. The remedy is slow, but for the moment it seems to be the only one in sight. I hope we shall be able to double our wheat production within the next three years. This will make a considerable difference to the railways which, without traffic, cannot be expected to pay. An old merchant once said to me, "Why not cut off some of the expenses when bad times come upon us?" We are running a train from Perth to Albany. That train must be run whether the traffic be great or small. People along that line depend on the running of trains for their very existence.

Mr. A. Thomson: It is not a bad paying line, either.

The PREMIER: It has to be run in any case. So, too, with other railways. If the trade is not there, the railways cannot be made to pay. The merchant alluded to said, "Why not knock off some of the expenses?" We have considerably reduced the number of hands employed, but that does not meet the loss by any means.

Mr. Johnston: That is since the end of the financial year.

The PREMIER: Yes. It is not possible to make both ends meet unless the people

for whom the railways are intended use the railways. If trade falls off, the railways suffer; if people do not travel, again the railways suffer. It is possible by increasing fares and freights to make the charges so high as to deter people from moving about. It is pretty certain that in some districts that has happened. Only a small percentage of the people have to travel on business, and so the people as a whole can cut out some of their journeys if the fares be too high. I doubt whether very much more can be done by increasing fares and freights. So we have to practice economies by cutting out mileage and effecting all possible saving. In addition, we must endeavour to develop trade. I expect the imports of goods will tend to get back to normal very soon, and I am told that after the new year there will be a considerable increase in the traffic to the goldfields. I hope so with all my heart.

Hon. P. Collier: What is it expected to arise from?

The PREMIER: It is expected that the mines will work more actively after the new year than they are working now—not for the reason my friend has in mind, but for quite other reasons. If this does happen, so much the better for the railway system.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that a wireless from the mission ship?

The PREMIER: No, it comes from Kalgoorlie.

Hon. P. Collier: I thought you might have had it from the Minister for Railways.

The PREMIER: I daresay he has been able to get good information in regard to the railways.

Hon. P. Collier: I believe they have a very good system in Singapore.

The PREMIER: Approaching £3,000,000, the railway expenditure is disbursed in small amounts. It it were spent in large amounts one could say whether or not it could be cut down. The revenue is received in the same way. It is a very difficult business to manage, particularly when the traffic over a number of lines is very light indeed. It has been said that the spur lines are not profitable. I think they are, because without them there would be very little traffic over the main system. By those spur lines we must develop additional traffic, if the railways are to make both ends meet. I do not think I can say anything more about these Estimates. I have been able to show just what the financial results for this year will be; I have shown what the loss was last year and that it is expected the result will be about £195,000 better this year than it was last year. The loss this year will be £260,000 plus £140,000 sinking fund, whereas last year the loss was £454,000 plus £140,000 sinking fund. If that be the result this year, as I believe it will be, we ought to be satisfied, because we shall have wiped out 50 per cent. of the loss in one year. If the Committee desire further information, I hope I shall be able to supply it, although I am not intimately acquainted with every detail of the ramifications of the railways. I have brought

with me some information which, I expect, members may ask for.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.22]: We know that finance is the main thing in regard to government, and that in connection with our financial position the Premier has told us the railways and other public utilities are practically responsible for our deficit.

The Premier: Are altogether responsible.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Apparently there is a leakage in some portion of the railway system. It would be well if we had a thorough inquiry into the Railway Department, with particular attention to freights and fares. Some of the freights are run at a loss, while others are fairly profitable. Pyritic ore and several other things used in the manufacture of fertilisers, and even fertilisers and super and wheat and many other agricultural and mining products, are carried at a loss. While I, with most other members, am in sympathy with the giving of every encouragement to primary industries by means of cheap railway freights, it is useless to blame the administration of the railways for running the system at a loss when we know that deliberately a large proportion of the freight is being carried at a loss. It would be well if the Committee got right down to business and found out what freight is profitable and what unprofitable; and, having ascertained what freight is showing a loss, it would be up to us to consider whether it was worth while perpetuating it. A lot of agricultural products are being carried at a loss. If we continue this policy we shall land ourselves in the bankruptcy court and the State will be stone broke.

Mr. A. Thomson: We are pretty well stone broke now.

The Premier: Nothing of the sort!

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not believe in crying stinking fish, but I think the Government recognise the fact that our financial position is very serious. So often has this been said in the House that it is in danger of becoming a platitude; still, the position has to be faced. As the Railway Department is largely responsible for it, it is about time we determined where the trouble lies. I suggest that the department go into the question of freights and tell the House which are profitable and which unprofitable. The Committee could then consider whether we are to go on allowing certain classes of freights to be carried at unprofitable rates. If we desire to continue to subsidise the agricultural industry, let us do it by a straight out method, and not cast the whole of the burden on the railways. With the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) I was on the disputes committee which had the handling of the railway strike at the beginning of the year. I say unhesitatingly that the settlement of that trouble, and the events

which followed, revealed the most flagrant breach of the word of a public man which, I have ever known. We were given to understand that certain conditions would operate if a settlement were effected.

The Premier: They were written down, so there should have been no misunderstanding.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If a man states in writing that he is going to recognise overtime and night shift by extra payments, it is not honest for him to get out of it by saying "We are paying them already." If any industrial trouble arises in the future, the railway men will not take any notice of the word of the public man with whom they have to negotiate. I do not blame the Commissioner, because throughout the industrial trouble he showed himself bereft of the faculty of negotiation. He displayed no spirit of compromise; he did not in any way assist to bring about the settlement. He may be all right as a railway man—I have no wish to criticise him in that regard just now—but I confidently say that in negotiating an industrial dispute, the Commissioner is the right man in the wrong place.

The Premier: Better than being the wrong man in the right place.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Certainly he was the wrong man to occupy that position and endeavour to effect the settlement of an industrial dispute. Apparently, even the Government saw that he was incapable, for they became parties to the dispute and to the agreement which was subsequently dishonoured.

The Premier: It has not been dishonoured.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If the Government thought that the written agreement did not provide for extra payment, I do not know what the last four or five hours haggling was all about. It was reasonable to assume that there was something in the settlement on which Cabinet could not agree. There would have been no difficulty in their coming to an agreement if all of the Ministers considered the settlement was the one on which they had decided. I have spoken to people who were associated with both parties in this dispute. The mediatory committee all unhesitatingly affirm that they believed the settlement was that there should be extra payment for night work and overtime. I hope there will be no more industrial trouble in connection with the railways but, if there is, it will be ever so much more bitter than on the last occasion. The men have done what they thought they undertook to do. They carried out their duties to the last minute before ceasing work; they put everything away so that when the trouble ended there would be no difficulty again in getting the wheels of industry started. I cannot say the same for the Government. It is the most flagrant breach of the word of a public man of which I know.

The Premier: I do not think you are entitled to say that. The dispute was submitted to an untrammelled court.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Quite so, with certain definite principles recognised. So far as I could understand the settlement, and I, was there most of the time, extra payment for night work and overtime having been agreed upon, the court had to decide what the extra payment should be.

The Premier: It was not agreed to at all. The court had to decide that question.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Then why did the men go out on strike? They could have had a settlement on those terms on the first day. I have not a copy of the "Daily News" with me, but an editorial published at the time showed that they were under no misapprehension as to the position and as to what the Government actually did.

The Premier: You know what you did; you signed the agreement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Public opinion considered that the Government, after not agreeing in the first place, had eventually agreed to the principle of extra payment for overtime and night work. The principal business of the railways during the last five or six months has been that of retrenching some men and transferring others all over the system. Men have been transferred for a week or two and then returned to their original stations. There has been a sort of triangular swapping going on all round without making any real difference.

Mr. Teesdale: Anything but discharging men. They have been doing their best to find work.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If one man goes from Perth to Kalgoorlie, another from Kalgoorlie to Albany, and another from Albany to Perth, there are still three men as before occupying similar positions. One man was transferred from Geraldton to Perth and when he reported, he was asked why he had come to Perth. He stated that he had been transferred by the officer in charge, and the reply he received was, "You had better go back to Geraldton; we have no work for you here." While retrenchment has been the order of the day with regard to the wages men, extra men have been added to the supervisory staff.

Hon. P. Collier: Increased wholesale.

The Premier: They are the same men.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, different positions were created. Men occupying subordinate positions have been placed in charge of districts and given a rise in salary. New offices have been created. It is impossible to take a man from a subordinate position in Perth and create a supervisory office for him in Bunbury without giving him a staff of two, three, or four clerks to carry out the duties. That is what occurred in connection with the engineers for the ways and works. A new engineer's office was established at Bunbury and also one at Northam.

The Premier: When was an engineer's office started at Northam?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Within the last 12 or 18 months.

The Premier: Who is the engineer?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not sure about an engineer being sent to Northam, but there was a traffic superintendent and a district superintendent. The creation of extra office staffs and the rises given to these men have increased the cost of supervision over what it was before. Some people think that extra supervision is absolutely necessary. I say on behalf of the railway men that they do not want all this supervision. Most of the men know their job, and most of them do it whether they are supervised or not. It is ridiculous to keep on creating positions for the supervision of men who thoroughly understand and are capable of doing their work, and who really do their work. If the happenings of the last two years continue, we will soon have one boss to every man. If, with the creation of this extra supervision, the system was paying better or giving better results, there might be some justification for it, but while the staff is being augmented in this way, the position of the railways is becoming worse. Anyone who understands human nature knows that, if a boss is standing over a man all the time, he will work well while the boss is there, but not when he has gone.

The Minister for Works: That is what they call evening up.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If one has confidence in a man and tells him to do a certain job, he will do it with comparatively little supervision. Extra advisory staff have been appointed in connection with the northern district railways. A portion of the railway administration which comes under my notice is that between Geraldton and Walkaway. If anyone wished to see a modern darktown railway in operation, I would commend him to this section. We have a through train from Geraldton to Perth and that train does all the shunting on the earlier stages of the journey. The next day a train engaged on a purely local service from Geraldton to Walkaway runs through at express speed. The same thing applies to trains running from Perth to Geraldton. The train which arrives at Walkaway at 10 p.m. on Wednesday has to shunt all the way thence to Geraldton; this, after 15 or 16 hours of travelling. On the Tuesday, however, the purely local train runs through at express speed.

The Minister for Works: Blame the transport; not the general manager.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The general manager is supposed to supervise the transport as well as other branches of the service. These things are brought under the notice of the responsible heads. The express runs should be done by the long-distance train and the roadside work by the purely local train. I wish now to refer to the disturbance in the upper circles of railway officialdom with regard to the appointment of Mr. Gallagher. I hold no brief for Mr. Gallagher, neither do

I hold a brief for Mr. Shillington, but I know that there has apparently been a Press campaign carried out on behalf of Mr. Shillington. A leading article appeared in the "West Australian" obviously inspired in his favour. During the next few days 20 or 30 letters over such pseudonyms as "Observer," "Looker-on," and "Traveller," appeared, boosting up Mr. Shillington at the expense of Mr. Gallagher. Apparently, all were written by the same individual, because the phraseology was similar in most instances, and even the sentiments expressed were to a great extent similar. It is the Commissioner's job to pick out the man capable of giving the best service and, while it might be a principle under ordinary circumstances, that the man in a certain position should be the next on the list for promotion, if the Commissioner considers him unsuitable for the job, he should be allowed to exercise his discretion. Apparently Mr. Shillington wants to put the Commissioner in the position of saying he is an absolute dud from a railway point of view, or else that he is to be put over the head of an officer whom the Commissioner considers to be a better man for the position. I have sufficient confidence in the Commissioner to believe that he is endeavouring to do what is best in the interests of the Railway Department. During last year, applications were invited throughout the Commonwealth for a draftsman for service in the Railway Department. When the Commissioner was being appointed to his position, I gave him what little support I could, because I recognised that he was a West Australian who had had considerable experience of our railways and who, if he possessed any brains, should be in a better position than an outsider to run our railways. However, we find that for this job of draftsman, applications were called all over Australia, and originally the salary offered was £382. Four or five applications were submitted. The papers have been laid on the Table of the Legislative Council, and, being curious as to who the applicants were, I have looked through the papers. I do not know any of the applicants and have not heard of any of them before, but if I were asked to pick out a suitable man I should say that the applicant Kirkbride appears to possess all the necessary qualifications. He was trained in the Western Australian workshops and has done excellent service in the Commonwealth Railway Department. I was unable to find on the file anything to the detriment of this applicant. He served his time in the shops for five years, supervised the construction of the Royal car and carried out other jobs successfully. I do not know why he was turned down, but apparently it was decided to get a man from England. When applications were called for in England another £70 was added to the salary, second class fare for the applicant was guaranteed, three years of service, and half pay while travelling, and then a rise at the end of three years, all of which

would amount to a difference of about £125 a year. If the Government had been prepared to advertise the position at that figure in the first place they would probably have had more applicants and have found someone in Australia to fill the job, even if the man I have mentioned had been turned down, as was the case, for no particular reason. It does not say much for the training at the Midland Junction workshops that when a job is offered in the department a man who has served his time in the way I have indicated is turned down without any excuse whatever. Last year the report of the Railway Commissioner contained a definite expression of opinion with regard to the 44 hours' principle. During the discussion on last year's Estimates I said I did not think the Commissioner was justified in making the statement that the introduction of that principle had worked detrimentally to the service. He qualified that statement subsequently by saying he had not sufficient data to go upon, but his original statement went forth to the world while the qualification was suppressed. The Commissioner supervises two or three thousand men, and when the principle was introduced he said definitely that so far as his opinion went it would resolve itself into an equal reduction in the work. I proved to my own satisfaction at all events, and to the satisfaction of many other members, that the statement was not correct.

Hon. P. Collier: He said it had not been in operation long enough to enable him to judge.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The fact that he had pronounced judgment along these lines was sent all over the States, but his admission that he had not sufficient time in which to judge was suppressed.

Hon. P. Collier: It certainly was.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Commissioner gave a general condemnation of the principle, on admittedly insufficient data. After he had the opportunity of gathering the necessary data one would have thought he would have ventured to express some opinion on the question in his annual report. The first thing I looked for in the report was such an expression of opinion, to see whether he would make some authoritative statement upon this principle, but the report preserved a still and stony silence upon the whole matter.

Mr. Mann: You do not think silence means consent?

Hon. P. Collier: He should have followed it up.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I should say that when a man expresses an opinion without the necessary data, and subsequently obtains the necessary data, but is afraid to alter his opinion, there is only one inference to be drawn.

Hon. P. Collier: That it would not support his statement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The inaccuracy of the statement was proved by the amount of work that was done. I tried to find out from the report the number of men working this year

compared with the number working last year and the amount of work done in each case, but I could not arrive at the information. The only figures available in the report refer to the number of men on the job on the 30th June. I suppose the whole thing is averaged out. I find from the report that in the workshops, the number of fitters employed in 1920 was 225, and in 1921 it was 261. There were about 20 per cent. more men doing fitting than in the previous year. The report states that the repairs were well done, and the engines were thoroughly overhauled, and that the volume of work had increased 40 per cent., although the percentage of men had only increased by 20. When engines are thoroughly overhauled it means that as much work as is necessary has been done. There were about 6 per cent. more boilers employed in the latter year, and 19 per cent. more work was done in the way of thoroughly overhauling boilers. The same thing is shown right through the report. There were 15 per cent. more painters employed and there was about the same percentage increase in the work done. In other cases we find a similar result, notwithstanding the fact that during the former year six months work was done on the 48 hour principle and six months on the 44, and that for the whole of the last year the work was done under the 44 hours principle. The Commissioner should have given us an expression of opinion upon data which could have been checked. Why did he express an opinion last year on this subject if he did not mean to follow it up? It is the opinion in the department that as much work, if not more, has been done under the 44 hours principle than was done before. No doubt the Commissioner and some of his officers will say that the supervision was better, or that the work of the heads of the department was better. It was a strange thing that in those branches where better work is being done no extra supervision has been given. I am glad the Commissioner has recognised that the permanent way is in a bad state of repair. In 1902 one man was employed for every two miles of railway, and the position gradually became worse until last year there was only one man employed on the permanent way to every four miles of railway. It has been the policy right through, when it was necessary to reduce expenditure, to put off a few navvies.

The Premier: We have put on a lot.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is just as well this has been done. I am glad the Commissioner has recognised that he went below the safety point in regard to the permanent way. Every traveller on our railways must wonder whether he will reach his destination alive or not. The oscillation of the goldfields train is tremendous.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, especially when coming through the hills.

Mr. WILLCOCK: On the Wongan Hills line, also, one receives many severe bumps, and if it were not for the straps on the top

berth people might sometimes be rocked out of it. The Commissioner has put on more men now than he had last year. I hope this policy of whittling down the expenditure upon the permanent way will not be continued when any scheme of retrenchment comes before the department. The use of petrol-driven cars for taking men to and from their work on the permanent way is of considerable benefit to the department. The men reach their jobs fresh, and the labourers do more work than they did when they had to push the Kalamazoo, as it was called, 15 miles against a head wind. When a man has finished his day's work—he is allowed to knock off an hour and a half before time at the expense of the department to pump the trolley home—he is not able to do a full day's work, but if he were given the opportunity of reaching his work and coming home from it on one of these petrol-driven cars the department would derive much benefit, as well as the man himself. I hope the Premier will see the wisdom of suggesting to the Commissioner that he should make a thorough investigation into the rates, and let us know definitely where the losses occur. If chaff is being carried too cheaply we should be informed. We know that wheat is being carried under cost.

The Premier: We do not know that. It is not the case.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is carried at a cheaper rate than the average rate. Every single item of freight appears to be carried at a different rate. The rate book is a weird and wonderful document, and recently it was embodied in a special issue of the "Government Gazette," comprising several scores of pages. I do not know why it costs more to carry one kind of freight than it does to carry another. I think one of the reasons why there is such a big deficit on the railways is that the freights are imposed under a wrong system.

Mr. Johnston: You are not advocating a flat rate, are you?

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, but I would not have a dozen clerks continually making alterations to the rate book. Alterations are made every two or three weeks on different classes of traffic. Some of the freight is undoubtedly carried at a loss, while other classes of freight are carried at a handsome profit.

The Premier: Some of the lines are working at a loss.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Some traffic is carried too cheaply from the railway point of view. If we like to carry wheat at a loss, as an incentive to the wheat producer, and so as to make the industry a payable one, that is our responsibility, but it should not be a debit to the railway administration. If we subsidise the agricultural industry to the extent of £150,000 a year, as I think we do in the carriage of agricultural products, it is just as well for us to know. If this is going to land us in insolvency and we permit it with our eyes open, we have only ourselves to blame, but if the information is withheld from us, we have no means of forming an opinion on

the question. I hope that instructions will be given to the Railway Department to prepare a traffic list and a list of rates charged, so that when these Estimates come before us next year we shall know exactly what freights are paying and what freights are not paying. Then we shall be able to give an expression of opinion as to whether non-paying freights shall be continued.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville) [10.1]: I shall not offer a very close criticism of these Estimates. The reception of my very kindly criticism of another vote last night was such as to make me feel somewhat discouraged.

Mr. Corboy: You will be more discouraged in two years' time.

Capt. CARTER: I wish the Premier had been present last night; I am sure he would have protected me. Passing from one vote to another, we new members are beginning to realise the uselessness of running our heads against a stone wall. We all have pet ideas of our own; we all have just one scheme which is going to bring the millennium a year or two nearer; and we all believe, or used to believe, that we could wipe out the deficit. But, when it comes down to hard tin-tacks, most of us recognise the difficulties up against which the Government are standing to-day. In the case of these Estimates, I shall content myself with pointing out one striking anomaly existing in railway working to-day. I refer to the allotment of rolling stock for the carriage of live stock. What amounts practically to a monopoly has grown up in this connection. On certain days of the week private owners of stock cannot get a single truck for the purpose of carrying their stock to the Midland Junction market.

Hon. P. Collier: The department work in with the ring so as to keep up the price.

Capt. CARTER: I have here a quotation from the "West Australian" of the 29th November, giving a report of the railway case in the Arbitration Court. I have not seen the official shorthand-writer's transcript of the proceedings; but I take it the "West Australian" report, which is the only one available to me, is correct, inasmuch as it has not been denied—

In the Arbitration Court yesterday an official of the Railway Department, when giving evidence on behalf of the Commissioner, during the hearing of the case now before the court, said, in answer to Mr. Haynes (conducting the union case), that trucks for the carriage of stock to Midland Junction stock sale yards were issued only to recognised stock agents.

The President (Mr. Justice Draper): But you are common carriers?

Witness: Yes.

Mr. Poynton (for the Commissioner of Railways): The department is not under any obligation to supply trucks.

The President: If the witness is correct in his answer that the Commissioner of Railways would refuse to accept an order from a private individual for the carriage

of stock to the Midland sale yards, it creates rather an extraordinary position.

Mr. Poynton: The department possesses only a certain amount of rolling stock, and that is reserved for the use of certain recognised traders for the sale yards.

On this question I am not out to particularise individuals; I care not who the agents are. I am out to condemn the system which is operating through the Railway Department. These railways of ours are the property of the citizens at large, as much so as any other State possession. The citizens are mutual owners of our railway system, and they have every right to use that system, and they should be given every consideration, irrespective of their position in the commercial world or in the farming world. At present, it seems, growers in certain parts of this State cannot place their stock on the market to advantage as compared with certain recognised stock agents, who are absorbing all the rolling stock. It means that if these other growers wish to place their stock on the market at Midland Junction on Wednesday, they are obliged to truck it a day or two earlier than is necessary. Only in this way can they put their stock in the ring on the same day as those registered agents put theirs there.

Mr. Willcock: The private growers would not be supplied with the trucks in any case, unless ordering through an agent.

Capt. CARTER: I know nothing of that.

Mr. Willcock: That is the fact.

Capt. CARTER: I understand that the growers can get trucks on certain days; but the main fact before me is that on days when carriage is taking place for the sale at the yards on the next day, these growers cannot get trucks. That fact was admitted by the representatives of the Commissioner of Railways in the Arbitration Court.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, the department admit it; they call it "stabilising the market."

Capt. CARTER: The position appears to me to amount to a pandering to market rigging, if it is not a deliberate—

Hon. P. Collier: Conspiracy!

Capt. CARTER: Conspiracy, and an aid to market rigging!

Mr. Money: It is to prevent a scarcity of stock, or a glut of stock.

Mr. Corboy: It is to create an artificial scarcity!

Capt. CARTER: Whatever the explanation may be, the position is that certain recognised agents, as is admitted by the representative of the Commissioner of Railways in a public court, can place so much stock on the market as suits their own book, just so much and no more. That system plays up to market rigging. That naturally increases the cost of living.

The Premier: How is it sheep are so very cheap?

Capt. CARTER: For the simple reason that at certain seasons of the year sheep have got to come on the market, a fact as well known to the Premier as it is to me.

The effect of so many sheep going on the market is, naturally, to bring down the price of sheep.

Mr. Money: The other day I saw cattle sold for the cost of freight.

Capt. CARTER: That helps to support the case I am putting up. If cattle are being sold for the cost of their carriage, or whatever the price may be, it simply proves that there must be some middlemen's ring getting between the consumer and the producer, because the producer is not getting a fair price for his beasts, while the consumer is paying too much for his meat. The system is anomalous and wrong, and leads to market rigging, which leads to increased cost of living, with resultant widespread discontent and industrial unrest. I am speaking in the interests of the producer, and in those of the consumer, and in those of the revenue of the Railway Department. If the department deliberately limit the supply of rolling stock on certain days, or on all days, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition—who should know—then they are denying to themselves certain revenue; and that is wrong from the financial point of view and from every commercial point of view. I felt that I had to make this protest, in view of the statements made in a public court by an accredited representative of the Commissioner of Railways—statements which have not been followed by the prompt disclaimer that I anticipated. Another report of proceedings in the same place states—

The President: I'm surprised that no one has brought an action against the department.

Mr. Poynton: No private person can obtain trucks to bring stock in on Monday or Tuesday nights and there is a very good reason for it.

The President: It looks very much like a close corner between the metropolitan sales operators and the Commissioner for Railways.

Mr. Poynton: I think Your Honour is under a misapprehension.

The President: I hope I am, but I know that complaints have been made.

Again, those statements have not been denied or disproved. They indicate that there is something very loose in the administration of the Railway Department, and something very much wrong with the leadership of the department.

The Premier: But that position has existed for years.

Mr. Corboy: That does not make it right.

Capt. CARTER: I do hope the Premier will be able to give the Committee, by way of reply to the case I have put up, something more substantial than an instance or two of sales of stock at low prices.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [10.11]: It seems to me that the policy of management of the Railway Department is rather extraordinary in some respects. I do not

know whether the attention of the Premier has yet been drawn to a matter which was brought under my notice, and to which I was asked to draw the attention of Parliament when the opportunity offered. I quote from the report of a recent interview between the Commissioner of Railways and representatives of the railway union—

Though various regulations and pension Acts prescribe the age of retirement from Government services, usually 60 years, and compulsory at 65, it has remained for the Chief Mechanical Engineer to create an innovation whereby men over 45 years of age were considered as unsuitable for a certain position. As such a proposal would have far-reaching effect, the joint railway unions took the question up and interviewed the Commissioner of Railways.

If the Railway Department, in its dealings with its officers, lays it down as a principle that no one shall be promoted beyond the age of 45 years, the result must be most discouraging to officers of middle age. I am surprised to think it possible that this should be the policy of our Government—I presume the Commissioner of Railways is carrying out the policy of the Government. The Commissioner is reported as having stated to the deputation—

After all, it is giving an opportunity to the younger men, which they do not always get, and it counterbalances the few elderly men's dissatisfaction. I should have thought you would welcome it.

Mr. Kenafick: They are very dissatisfied, because these men will be passed over in favour of a man they have been previously directing, and on top of that there will be the general application of the principle throughout the shop that the men will view with alarm.

Mr. Kenneally: The head of the branch admitted they were qualified.

The Commissioner: They were qualified, but too old.

Mr. Kenneally: Two are 58.

The Commissioner: They are over 58.

Mr. Kenneally: Suppose they were 46, you would pass them over.

The Commissioner: That is so; you have to draw the line.

We cannot expect a contented service doing its very best in middle life if officers are to be passed over at the age of 45 for any promotion coming along.

Hon. P. Collier: The Commissioner would not have got his own job if 45 had been the limit.

Mrs. COWAN: No; in that case we would not have the present Commissioner. There is another anomaly to which I wish to draw attention, as regards clerical cadets. The standard in the past has been, I believe, the seventh standard of the Government schools, which is a good enough standard for all ordinary purposes, especially at the present time, when many people

are unable to send their sons to the university. They would not be able to do this even if it remained free. Now, however, the standard set up by the Railway Department is that of the Junior University examination. That seems to me a distinct hardship and hindrance to the many people who are debarred from sending their sons to the University, certainly now that fees are to be imposed. The handicap is an unfair one, and surely it does not represent the policy of the Government. Those are the two matters to which I wish to draw the attention of the Government. I have no personal concern regarding the cases of Mr. Shillington and Mr. Gallagher; but I certainly believe, and so do many right-thinking people, that it is a great mistake to keep a man in a position for 14 years, and then, if he is not fit for it, to pass him from that position to a higher one, superseding the man who has been qualifying and must be competent, otherwise he would not have been all those years filling the position of Superintendent of Transport. These unjust things lead to unrest and dissatisfaction and cannot be beneficial to the public interests. Why was Mr. Gallagher not shifted long ago? Mr. Shillington has been in his position for some 14 years. Mr. Gallagher was 14 years in his position. Why was he not promoted long before, if it was right to promote him over the heads of men who had been qualifying for that particular position. The Government do not seem to realise the policy that has been followed in the Railway Department. It is possible that a little more interest should be taken in this matter. Even if the Commissioner has the absolute powers indicated, and he cannot be removed from office for a period of seven years, it is reasonable to suppose that the policy of the Government could be indicated to him and an intimation conveyed to him that it was not being observed. I want to point out these anomalies and ask if it is any wonder that we have unrest and dissatisfaction in the Railway Department, if such is the attitude taken up by the man who is at the head of the service.

Mr. CORBOY (Yilgarn) [10.17]: I wish to draw the attention of the Committee to one or two aspects of the railway administration at the present time. In the first place, it seems to me that those in control of the railway administration, and particularly the Commissioner, because he is at least nominally in control, appear to have become panic stricken. They are adopting all sorts of palliative remedies which cannot be expected to remove the troubles. To add a shilling to the monthly tickets in order to stop the drift in the railway finances, is a ridiculous idea. In the absence of the Minister for Railways, I want to remind the Premier of a promise which was made during the early stages of the present session. When the member for West Perth

(Mrs. Cowan) was speaking on the Address-in-reply, she referred to the charges levied in connection with the carriage of perambulators. The Minister for Railways promised that those rates would be immediately removed.

Mrs. Cowan: They have been reduced by a half.

Mr. CORBOY: They have not been reduced. I paid the same amount on my "pram" last week. It cost me a shilling as usual, so I know what I am talking about. The Minister promised he would immediately remove that charge, and that promise is on record in "Hansard." In spite of that promise, the charge is still being levied.

The Premier: What about a "pram" built for two?

Mr. CORBOY: I think you should subsidise the poor beggar of a woman who has to push it.

Mrs. Cowan: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORBOY: I draw the attention of the Premier to this matter in purely friendly spirit because in view of the definite promise made by the Minister. I am sure it has been overlooked. To require me to pay a shilling every time I want to bring my "pram" into town is a bit too hot. As to the question of retrenchment in the railways, I will not deny that some of the men who have been dismissed can be done without, but I feel that in some instances the retrenchment has not been in the best interests of the railway service. In almost every instance those who have been dismissed have been wages men. Because of the difficulty in getting rid of men on the clerical staff, they are kept on. In reply to a question I put to the Minister a few weeks ago, I was told that during the last financial year the percentage increase of the wages staff and of the mileage run were approximately the same. The percentage increase of the salaried staff was approximately 2 per cent. higher than the other percentages. When retrenchment is enforced, we find that the retrenchment takes place among the wages men but it does not affect the salaried staff. As the result of this policy, it is amusing to watch the way the traffic is handled at the Southern Cross railway station. They have done away with the platform porter there, but they have kept on a goods porter in the goods shed, and they have the same salaried staff as before. As the result of the retrenchment, we see the station master, who is paid a salary to carry out the duties of a station master, running along the platform with a barrow load of goods.

Mr. Money: I have seen a Commissioner do that.

Mr. Willcock: He could be better occupied than doing that.

Mr. CORBOY: Something of the same sort may have been said regarding a previous Commissioner. In any case, the position at Southern Cross is really amusing. The signal box is perched as high as the

ceiling of this Chamber. When a goods train arrives during the middle of the night, the station master has to do the shunting. He has to shunt a truck and then run up the flight of steps to the high-perched signal box and alter the points. Then he runs down and shunts another truck, after which he has to again run up the steps to the signal box and shift the points. So it goes on until the work is done. This means that it practically takes three hours to get a goods train into and out of the Southern Cross station. In order to save a porter's wages, the department keep a fireman and a driver waiting in the yard for 2½ hours longer than should be necessary.

The Minister for Works: Is the Southern Cross station fitted with the interlocking gear?

Mr. CORBOY: I am not sufficiently acquainted with railway working to know if that is so, but the point is that the station master has to carry on as I have described.

The Premier: Does he drive the engine, too?

Mr. CORBOY: The Minister for Works can appreciate how ridiculous this position really is, and it is the more ridiculous when it is realised that this is the result of saving a porter's wages. As a matter of fact, the department actually lose money by reason of these proceedings. Apart from this, however, when the goods train is out of the road, the station master has to work for three hours as hard as he can to get the goods off the platform and into the parcels office, so that the express train may pass through. It is ridiculous for the department to work along those lines. It can be readily appreciated that this sort of retrenchment is not economy at all, for it costs more to do the work to-day than when they had the porter. At the present time, there are four salaried officers at that station. There is the station master and three assistant station masters, including, of course, the night station master. It should be possible to find work for at least two of those salaried officers in some other part of the railway system, where they would be at least earning their salaries. If that were done, a porter could be reappointed to Southern Cross.

The Minister for Works: Do you not know that since the eight hours system was applied to station masters, they must have three men at least? Formerly they worked a 12 hour shift.

Mr. CORBOY: Better results would be achieved if the course I suggest were adopted.

The Minister for Works: There must be some good explanation for all this!

Mr. CORBOY: I cannot see what explanation they can advance for keeping a goods train two and a half hours longer at one station than was the case formerly, merely to save a porter's wage.

The Minister for Works: That cannot be the explanation, for that would be silly.

Those two hours would more than pay the porter's wages.

Mr. CORBOY: In any case, that is the position.

The Minister for Works: There must be some other explanation, because these people are not fools.

Mr. CORBOY: They are not all like a Commissioner we once had, but who now occupies a better job.

The Minister for Works: I do not know about that.

Mr. CORBOY: It is a ridiculous position. The Government and the Railway Commissioner are up against great difficulties, but the whole of the salaried staff are retained. Rather than put off the latest junior clerical cadet, the Commissioner puts off men who have been working from five to eight years with the department, men who have taken an interest in their work and have passed their safe working and other examinations. That policy is neither fair, just, right, nor reasonable. More than that, it is not economical. I am satisfied that if better organisation were introduced, it would be possible to get far better results. The administration of the Railway Department appears to have become panic stricken, and things are being done which make the authorities the laughing-stock of the whole community.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [10.26]: I wish to compliment the Government on their decision to build locomotives at the Midland Railway Workshops. Recently there was a parliamentary visit to those workshops. Although they are only about ten miles from Perth, I am satisfied that formerly many members of Parliament did not realise the extent of those works nor yet what they were capable of turning out. That particular visit to Midland Junction has done a considerable amount of good in more than one way. It has resulted in the men taking an added interest in their work, and I believe it would be beneficial if more visits by responsible men of Perth were paid to those workshops. For years the whole of the material for the railways has been manufactured at the Midland Junction workshops and it has been manufactured as cheaply as was possible in any other part of the world, including the Eastern States. I am glad that it has now been decided to manufacture our locomotives there as well. According to the Commissioner's report, locomotives were urgently required last year, although up to the time the report had been furnished by the Commissioner, the decision to start work on the locomotives had not been arrived at, I hope the Government will put that work in hand immediately. If that is done, employment will be found for the men who were retrenched from the workshops and from the locomotive branch some time ago. There is another important matter to which I desire hon. members to give their attention. If there is one thing which is giving concern to

the people of Western Australia, it is: What shall be done with our boys? In this connection, I refer to the selection of apprentices for the Midland Junction workshops. I recently asked a series of questions to ascertain how the apprentices were selected. Up to that time, the method of selection was somewhat haphazard. According to the replies to my questions, a more scientific method of selection has been adopted. So far as I can analyse the answers to my questions, they are not altogether satisfactory to me or to 90 per cent. of the people concerned. In the past, the selection has been conducted after the following fashion: Let us assume a hundred boys applied for the vacancies and only 20 were required. The selection board consists of three men, the workshops manager, the representative of the particular department requiring apprentices, and the representative of the union affected. The selectors line up the whole of the applicants in three rows, and each selects, say, half a dozen boys from one line, and those boys are given the positions. A better system would be to let the eligible boys ballot for the positions. In the past, I am afraid, the selection board has selected applicants with the best educational qualifications. According to the advertisement, applicants were first of all required to have passed the seventh standard. Many of the applicants have gone beyond that and passed their junior examinations, while others have been through the Technical School. The practice has been to select the boys with the higher educational qualification. Again, the applicants had to be of a minimum height of 5ft. 2in. The minimum age was 15 and the maximum 17. On an average we do not get boys 15 years of age of the same physical standard as boys of 17 years, and I am afraid the older boys, with the greater height, were given preference. The boys possessing the required qualifications should have been allowed to ballot for the position. I was told by the workshops manager that the positions were not balloted for, but that the successful applicants were chosen by the selectors. Many fathers keep their sons at school till they reach 16 or 17 years, in the hope that they may be taken on at the workshops as apprentices; but what chance has the poorer parent of seeing his hopes fulfilled if boys who have had higher education are to be given the places? I trust the Minister will insist on the selection board following the lines I have indicated, and that in future the positions will be balloted for. If that were done, there could be no complaint on the score that the boys were not all treated alike. If I can get from the acting Minister an assurance that something of the sort will be done, I shall be satisfied. Let me refer briefly to the increased prices of season tickets. Not many months ago the Minister for Railways declared he would not permit season tickets for three months and six months to be purchased at a cheaper rate than the monthly ticket, that he would insist upon

the rates being the same all through. Already we find that decision set aside.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Presently it will be cheaper to run motor cars between Perth and Fremantle than to ride on the railways.

Hon. P. Collier: Has there been any new increase on the longer period tickets?

Mr. DAVIES: I do not know, but I know that the proportion has been affected. For instance, if a monthly ticket cost 8s., a three monthly ticket can be purchased for less than 24s. A lad travelling between Perth and Midland Junction has to pay 8s. for a monthly ticket, when in point of fact he is earning perhaps not more than £1 per week. Only a few months ago the Minister declared that those able to purchase long period tickets should not have any advantage over those whose purchasing power was restricted to monthly tickets. Yet in the latest increases it will be found that the man who can only afford to purchase a monthly ticket is at a disadvantage as against the holder of a three-monthly ticket. It would almost appear that by some subterranean method the proportion has been affected and the price of certain tickets increased with a view to misleading the public on the main question. If the alteration in the proportion is justified, surely it is easy for the Minister to come along and explain. I do not know who is responsible for the policy, but certainly it is most reprehensible.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You must know that the Government are responsible.

Mr. DAVIES: Of course they have to take the responsibility, but I doubt whether the matter has been looked into as closely as it ought to have been. When the last increase was imposed, all periodical tickets were on the same rates, but under the increases which came into force to-day the proportion has been disturbed in favour of three-monthly and six-monthly tickets. I hope we shall get back to the system of equal proportion, otherwise I do not know where we will land ourselves. Reference has been made to people using motor cars and other means of transport, because railway travelling to-day is so expensive. To travel from West Guildford to Perth, a distance of six miles, costs 7d. each way, and I understand that the maximum fare charged on the trains is 5d. We want to encourage people to live out of the city, but we cannot expect them to do so when such high fares are being charged. In comparison with the fares charged in the Eastern States ours may be reasonable, but they represent a heavy expense for the man living in the suburbs. There should be some method of averaging the fares. I hope the acting Minister will take these matters into consideration and introduce some more equitable system.

Mr. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [10.41]: I regret exceedingly that the Minister for Railways is abroad on a tour instead of being in his place while the Estimates of this important department are under discussion.

Mr. Johnston: He is not worrying.

Mr. RICHARDSON: When the Premier, in introducing the Estimates, said we must look to the railways to find our greatest losses, it appealed to me that the Minister in charge of this department should have been present to-night. If we are going to do anything to assist the Minister and the Commissioner to reduce the losses on the railways, we must come more closely into contact with them. It is quite evident that there is something wrong with the administration. In my opinion there is no member of this House capable of exercising Ministerial control over the railways while trying to fill three or four other important offices. The railways constitute one of the largest of the State's institutions, and it is the work of one Minister alone to administer them if he is going to be successful.

Hon. P. Collier: Eighteen millions of our loan money is invested in the railways and it should be worth the time of one man to look after them.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes, and my contention is that one man cannot successfully control them if he has other big departments such as Mines and Forests to supervise. I repeat my regret that the Minister is not here, because he might have been able to throw more light on the present position of the railways.

Hon. P. Collier: I believe, the "Kangaroo" has been diverted to China.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I would not be surprised if that were so. I believe that a laudable attempt has been made to reduce the Estimates for the present financial year, but I trust that the trade and commerce of the State will improve so rapidly that those men who have been retrenched may be reinstated in the service. While the loss on our railways continues it seems necessary to increase fares and freights. In my opinion the people of the metropolitan area got the worst of the deal on every occasion when fares are raised. The people of the metropolitan area are continually travelling, and any increase in fares affects them to a greater extent than the country people who travel perhaps only twice or thrice a year.

Mr. Marshall: You are lucky people to be able to travel at all. We cannot afford to.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I sympathise with the hon. member in that. However, when fares are raised pro rata throughout the State, the people who travel twice or three times a day fare worse than those who travel only a few times a year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They will not travel; many people in the metropolitan area remain at home rather than pay the high fares.

Hon. P. Collier: The high fares are killing the traffic.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes, killing the trade of the railways.

Mr. Money: What is the alternative?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I know several men who will not take monthly tickets now.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The railways are intended to cater for people who are willing to travel, and the only way of inducing pro-

ple to travel is to keep the fares down to a reasonable level. By so doing, I think we would reap just as much revenue and we would be giving to the people the facilities to travel, which they must have. If we do not cater for the people, someone else is likely to come along with a cheaper means of transport. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) stated that certain commodities are carried into the country at a loss. I would hesitate before advocating the raising of freights on such products, but I agree that we should know where we stand. The time has arrived when some investigation should be made, so that we might be able to increase the freights on some commodities and reduce the freights on others. So far as I can judge, the position has become so mixed with the raising and lowering of freights during the past few years that we are not giving a fair deal all round. I agree with the member for Geraldton that we would be quite justified in appointing a committee of investigation, and I believe that the Minister and the Commissioner would be pleased at any such attempt on the part of the House to assist them to straighten matters out. During the past few weeks I have been inundated with questions relative to Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shillington. I do not know either gentleman personally and I do not know their capabilities.

Mr. Willcock: Did you read all the letters in the "West Australian."

Mr. RICHARDSON: I read a good many, but I grew tired of them. I have been inundated with questions from constituents who are in the railway service. Commissioner Pope was appointed by Parliament and, when a question of this description is made the subject of general discussion in the newspapers, it is for Parliament to discover whether Commissioner Pope is right or wrong.

Mr. Willcock: Probably he does not want to damn the other man's reputation.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Someone appears to be trying to damn the Commissioner's reputation. When he was appointed Commissioner, it was thought that he would make a good administrator, and I think he is a good administrator.

Mr. Davies: Well, give him a chance.

Mr. RICHARDSON: He has done all that any man could have done under the adverse circumstances which have prevailed. He is endeavouring to place the railways on a proper footing. At the same time, when he is challenged through the newspapers, it is for the Government who appointed him to ascertain whether he is right or wrong.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government must think he is right, because they would have to approve of his appointment.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a matter of judgment after weighing it all up.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Some of the railway men in my district are for Shillington and some are for Gallagher. The result will be that it will create dissension.

Mr. Underwood: Why should there be any unrest? They are paid to do the work.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I know nothing about the cause, nor have I any means of finding out. I want to probe into the matter and form my own judgment upon it.

Mr. Underwood: Who is going to cause unrest?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Unrest may be created unless something definite is done to find out who is right or wrong. It is my intention to move that the whole of the papers in connection with the appointment be laid on the Table of the House at an early date. I have been very much annoyed by the many questions that have been put to me, and I do not know who is right or wrong. In going through the Estimates I find that the major portion of the advances that are likely to be made this year are in connection with salaries and contributions to the Government Workers' Compensation Fund. These are matters over which the Minister and the Commissioner have no control. I am sure that every member will regard it as a successful move, more especially with respect to the increases in salaries, and there can be no opposition to anything on the Estimates. I am going to vote for them.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.53]: The working costs come out at 11s. 4½d. per mile, and are made up as nearly as possible as follows, not including 3s. 6d. per mile for interest charges:—actual traffic costs about 2s. 1½d., loco. costs 5s. 4d., maintenance 2s. 7d., and administration 4d., making a total of 11s. 4½d. per ton mile. It has been stated by one member that wheat is being carried over the railways at a loss. As a wheatgrower, and as a member representing a wheat-growing district, I say this is not correct. Wheat is carried in train loads, generally made up at a low cost of collection. The department may start at Merredin and fill up a train direct. In another case it may start immediately after leaving Merredin, picking up at such places as Nangeenan, Hine's Hill, and Baandee, at any rate making up a train load before reaching Kellerberrin. It is possible to load a train in this way at less cost per mile than in other ways, and that cannot be taken as an equitable average to charge to the wheatgrowers, or as a basis for forming the opinion that wheat is carried at a loss. It is impossible to speak of certain lines of traffic as being carried on an average train mileage and as being traffic on which a loss is made. There are certain incidental costs with which we are not conversant, and we do not know how the returns of the Railway Department are made up. What about the average train mileage on the heavy grades in the carriage of coal from Collie? The department can only take a certain tonnage and there are these heavy grades to go over. Take also the timber traffic from Pemberton, through Bridgetown, and on to Bunbury. The grades are also heavy. It is impossible to talk about this line and that line

of traffic as being below the margin of profit. It is not fair to fix on wheat and say it is carried at below cost.

Mr. Marshall: There was no statement made that wheat was carried at a loss.

Mr. HARRISON: That statement has often been made. Great care should be taken in the administration. On a single line as far as practicable our trains should run to schedule time. If the schedule is interrupted, and there are several miles to the next staff station, it means a loss on the rolling stock and on the locomotive power, and on the men both in the locomotive and the van. It would be better to have them all under the one department, as I have suggested, but this idea has not found favour. All new railways should be constructed through the one department. It is essential that the road should be constructed through the country at the lowest possible rate and that the department should have a voice in that construction, seeing that they have ultimately to run the line.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have a voice and are consulted.

Mr. HARRISON: That may be so. There are grades on some of our railways that should never have been permitted.

The Minister for Works: That is a question of a proper survey.

Mr. HARRISON: It should be prevented for the future.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If what you propose were carried out you would have no check on your loan funds.

Mr. HARRISON: It would pay handsomely to have a special loan for the purpose of reducing these grades. The cost of our traffic is bound to be heavy while we have these arbitration awards. When the people learn that these continual increases mean a decrease in the purchasing power of their money there may not be so many appeals to the court.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [11.0]: I am not going to speak at the length I had intended to earlier in the evening. I notice that members are weary and that there is a general atmosphere of tiredness around the Chamber.

Mr. Teesdale: We must not rest any more. We have to be careful.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I feel it is rather futile to discuss these Estimates at all. Nothing is ever accomplished. Little grievances are voiced, and there the matter ends. Especially, perhaps, will that prove to be the case on the present occasion. The Minister for Railways is away on some one or other of the seven seas of the world, and is not worrying much, it is to be supposed, about the Railway Department just now. But, having regard to the very important influence exercised on the finances of the State by the administration of the railway system, the Committee might usefully employ itself even for a day or two on a thorough discussion of railway administra-

tion generally. It is not to be denied that there is abroad to-day, in the public mind at any rate, a feeling that our railways are not being efficiently managed or controlled. The public have a general feeling of dissatisfaction and discontent as regards railway administration. That, possibly, is inseparable from a period marked by increased railway fares and freights and, concurrently, a reduction in the service rendered to the community.

Mr. Davies: The same remarks apply to the privately owned lines of the Old Country.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt. Allowance must be made for the fact that Western Australia is passing through a very difficult time, and that the Railway Department has found it necessary to adopt the disturbing measures to which I have referred. Allowing for that fact, one can partly explain the attitude of the people towards railway administration. However, with all allowance made for these considerations, I still hold there is ground for the public impression that our railway administration is not on sound lines. Last year the railways lost roughly £400,000. That means, simply, that somewhere service is being rendered at a loss—rendered at a loss to some section or sections of our citizens. I do not know whether the responsible officers of the department have thoroughly overhauled the position in order to ascertain exactly where the losses occur; I suppose they may have done so. I agree with the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) that where the department are rendering service to any section of the community at a considerable loss, the whole question of freights or other charges ought to be reconsidered. I believe I am right in saying that during recent years freights and fares have been increased practically all round. But the charge for the carriage of superphosphate has meantime remained stationary. Even before the war it was estimated by the Railway Department that the annual loss on the carriage of superphosphate amounted to £60,000. If it was £60,000 annually then, what must the annual loss be now? We know that the cost of operating the railways has increased all along the line during recent years; and so I suppose it would not be an exaggeration to say that the loss on the carriage of superphosphate may easily have doubled since then, may now amount to as much as £120,000 per annum. Even in pre-war days, when wages were lower, when the cost of material was lower, and the whole cost of operating the railways was considerably lower than is the case to-day, the State suffered a yearly loss of £60,000 on the carriage of superphosphate. Is it a fair thing to say, then, that the rate of one-farthing per ton per mile for the carriage of superphosphate now represents twice that loss of £60,000? During each year of the war the price obtained by the farmers for their wheat has been considerably higher than

the price in any pre-war year. Surely a section of the community in which comparative prosperity has prevailed, in the matter of both good seasons and good prices, should not call upon the general taxpayer to make up a loss of fully £100,000 in order that the prosperous section may receive a larger profit?

Mr. Harrison: Where are you getting your figures from?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member cannot have been listening. I said that the official figures of the Railway Department showed a loss during pre-war years on the carriage of superphosphate amounting to no less than £60,000 per annum, and, that being so, that it is not too much to say the loss now is equal to £100,000 per annum having regard to the increased cost all round of operating the railways. Why should the general body of taxpayers of this State be called upon to pay high fares and high freights, while many of those taxpayers are not doing so well as before the war, and therefore are not so well able to bear those higher freights and fares? This question is especially relevant in view of the fact that a prosperous section of the community enjoy the privilege of having one of their requirements carried over the railways at a loss. It is certain that if the Commissioner of Railways had had his way, he would have increased the rate on superphosphate. But of course it is not the policy of the Government to do that. The policy of carrying superphosphate at a loss may be sound. I know what are the arguments always advanced in its favour.

Mr. Teesdale: But surely such a thing should not be done for people in affluent circumstances?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The argument is that the farmer should be encouraged to use superphosphate, and that the Railway Department get back the loss in other ways, by increased tonnage of wheat and other products of the soil. But even though we might not ask the farmers to pay for the carriage of superphosphate a rate that would be payable to the Railway Department, it is a fair thing, surely, to ask them to pay a slight increase on the pre-war rate. We might say to the farmers, "We are still prepared to carry your requirements in the way of superphosphate at the loss which obtained during pre-war days, namely, a loss of £60,000 per annum; but when the Railway Department are losing altogether at the rate of £400,000 per year, and when everybody else is being saddled with increased freights and fares, it is only right that your rate for superphosphate should be increased sufficiently to keep the loss on its carriage down to the pre-war figure of £60,000 annually." Surely the mining industry is of importance. Yet it is a fact that the industry has suffered most severely from the increased railway rates. It is an absolute fact that some of our mines have been closed down by the high railway freights, while others have been

compelled to reduce their production, partly owing to the cause already mentioned, and partly owing to the great mileage over which their supplies have to be transported. And yet there is a favoured section of the community, one able to sell its product at high prices, with no increase in a special rate that involves the Railway Department in very heavy loss. It is nothing short of a scandal that this section of the community should still have this particular article carried at the same rate as obtained ten years ago.

Mr. A. Thomson: Are not the railways carrying ore at the same rate?

Hon. P. COLLIER: They are carrying hardly any ore at all. I think I could undertake to carry on my back practically all the ore that has been transported over the railways of this State latterly.

Mr. Mann: We must bear in mind that while there is back loading for the agricultural districts there is none from the mining districts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that is so.

Mr. Mann: But for such things as this superphosphate rate, the Railway Department would have to take their trucks up empty to bring the wheat back.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not alter the fact of the charge on superphosphate not covering the cost of the service. That fact is declared by the Commissioner of Railways himself.

Mr. Mann: But did you not recently read the statement that the department were carrying superphosphate into the farming districts instead of running empty trucks there to bring the wheat down?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. I know that it is easy to furnish excuses and explanations, but the one solid fact that stands out is that according to the official figures furnished by the railway authorities, the charges do not cover the cost. I should say that the loss would mean about £100,000. It is an outrage that this sort of thing should be allowed to continue while the charges levied on other people go up week by week. The fact that this loss is incurred—I am assuming that that is about the loss made—is in itself responsible for the higher charges for fares and freights levied upon the rest of the community. It would not have been necessary to increase fares and freights to such an extent, had it not been for this help given to the farmers by decreasing the charges on the haulage of superphosphate. All Governments occupying the Ministerial benches during the last few years, when reference has been made from time to time to the cost of the railways and the increase in charges, have pointed to the Arbitration Court and the awards issued by that tribunal as the excuse for those increased rates. Governments have said that they have to meet £250,000 a year, in addition to their previous cost, because of the rail-

way award; hence they seek to justify the levying of increased charges on the public generally. Why should the farmers enjoy this low freight and why should they not be called upon to pay their fair share of increased rates?

Mr. A. Thomson: Do you not think they are doing that?

Mr. Harrison: This only applies to one line.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why should that one line be exempt? It is because the Government are kept in office by members sitting on the cross benches. No other Government would allow this sort of thing to go on.

Mr. Harrison: You will not listen to me!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not want to listen to the hon. member; I know the facts. It is not a fair thing that every boy and girl going to school should have to pay 1s. deposit on his or her season ticket and, in some cases, have to pay 2s. 6d. as a deposit. It is not fair that the charges should be raised 10 per cent. as they were a day or two ago. In order that these gentlemen who have been getting such a good price for their wheat may get their superphosphate at lower rates, these extra charges have been imposed.

Mr. Latham: Do not the children in the country districts have to walk three miles to school?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I had to walk five miles to school.

Mr. Latham: Why should they not do it in the city?

The Minister for Works: But they will get their 1s. back.

Mr. Willecock: This is a new way of raising a loan.

Mr. McCallum: And a compulsory loan at that!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister has emphasised the fact that the children will get their deposits back, but will the Government pay interest on the money they have been holding? Money is the one thing that is sacred with members sitting on the Ministerial side of the House, and they regard it as the sacred right of the man lending money to secure interest on his money. This position should not be allowed to continue. It is very seldom that I mention the people in my constituency. I am not in the habit of retailing little grievances of the people I represent, but I am not prepared to remain silent and allow them to suffer from the disabilities which have been created under this system. The charges upon the haulage of superphosphate should be reviewed at the earliest possible moment. In view of the financial position of the railways and the State, surely it is time that we should see that the farmers pay a rate approaching the cost of the service rendered to them.

Mr. Mann: Suppose the farmer did not order his superphosphate until he wanted it,

trucks would have to be despatched empty to the agricultural districts for the loading of wheat.

Mr. Willecock: They send empty trucks now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have seen rakes of empty trucks going through the Mt. Lawley station night after night.

Mr. Mann: They are going to Midland Junction.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In any case, the farmers should be made to pay adequately for the services rendered. I would like to know from the Minister if charges have been increased again this week.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I noticed something in the "Government Gazette."

The Premier: There are one or two small matters dealt with.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is hard to compare the notices in the "Gazette" without having the rate book before you, but I am informed that the rates have been increased.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

The Premier: In any case the alterations only affected a few small things.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Every alteration is in the direction of an increase.

Mr. Willecock: It is just a slight adjustment!

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is 10 per cent. added to the monthly tickets and so on. I know the Railway Department is in difficulties regarding the finances but it is not justified in piling up charges in other directions when this one charge regarding superphosphates is allowed to remain unaltered. There is another important matter to which reference must be made. At the time of the wood line strike in 1919, the Government gave a concession to the Kurrawang Company which was of considerable value. The Government allowed the company to construct a railway from Kurrawang to the mines which enabled the company to haul firewood over its own line. The company did not have to pay freight on the haulage of wood over the Government section of the line from Kurrawang to the mines. I want to know what the loss to the department has been in consequence of this.

The Premier: There has been no loss.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But there must have been a loss.

The Premier: I have the figures.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know how figures are compiled by departments. If they show that there has been no loss, I will not believe them. In such a case, it would mean that formerly the Government had been hauling wood for the company without showing any profit for the service rendered.

The Premier: There was hardly any profit at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, that is a nice type of management! No wonder the railway finances have gone to the dogs, if that is

the position! Here we have wealthy mines supplied with firewood by a wealthy wood-line company, and yet we are told that the Railway Department has been rendering services to such people at cost price, thus showing no profit on the operation!

Mr. Mann: And in the interests of the mines.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the mines, like the company, could well afford to pay. Yet we are told that this hard-up State was hauling firewood for those people at cost price! I hope the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) has now got all he wants from the railway official in the Speaker's gallery. The hon. member is in the habit of using Government officials. Frequently he goes to heads of departments to obtain information for use in the Chamber, a thing which no other member would do. If he has gone to an officer of the Railway Department for material to be used in reply to arguments I have put up, I say it is an entirely improper thing for him to do. I object to an officer of the Railway Department being in this House to prompt any member in replying to arguments I have used.

Mr. A. Thomson: Whether correct or not?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. There we see the calibre of the hon. member revealed. No other member would dream of putting a departmental officer in such a position. Fancy a member going out through the bar of the House into the Speaker's gallery, where a railway officer is sitting, in order to get information to enable him to reply to another hon. member! Who but the member for Katanning would dream of such a thing? The hon. member ought to be thoroughly well ashamed of putting a Government official into such a position. But it is a common practice with the hon. member. He goes to Government officers and gets from them official information which he is not entitled to. During my 16 years as member of this House, I have never yet approached any Government officer for arguments to be used in the House. It is up to the hon. member to dig out his own information and cease going round Government offices for official arguments to be put forward as the product of his own brains or energy.

The Minister for Works: Is that what is known as working under the lap?

Hon. P. COLLIER: For the hon. member to go out of the Chamber into the Speaker's gallery and get a note from a railway official while I am speaking, is a shocking thing. Never since Responsible Government has there been any other member but the member for Katanning who would have thought of doing such a thing.

Mr. A. Thomson: You must be afraid for your case.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not afraid of anything the hon. member can put up in reply to me. I follow the practice of getting my information for myself. I do not go trotting about trying to suck other men's brains before replying to an opponent. I

try to get my own information. I do not come here, after sucking other men's brains, and give out the information as if it were legitimately my own. I do not know that I am prepared to continue my comments on the Estimates, Mr. Premier, if one of your officers is to sit in the gallery and furnish information to another member to enable him to say that my statements are not correct—as the hon. member, by interjection, has already indicated. Of course, the departmental officer is here to assist the Minister, which is perfectly proper. The Minister would be entitled to go to his officer to get information concerning any statements I make, but it is an extraordinary thing for a private member to do.

The Premier: You cannot blame the officer.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not blaming the officer. If I were a departmental officer, I am afraid I should have to do the same if a member came up to me and asked for information.

Mr. A. Thomson: I will take all the blame.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But it is a most discreditable thing for any hon. member to do. I hope the Minister will give his officers instructions that no information is to be imparted to private members.

The Premier: The officer is here to assist the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And rightly so; but for a private member, without consulting the Minister, to go to that officer and ask for information is, well, I can only say it is worthy of the member for Katanning. I was referring to the concession granted to the Kurrawang Wood Company. The Premier says it occasioned no loss. I am not prepared to believe that. The Minister is relying on information supplied to him. I am not prepared to accept the statement that, prior to the concession being granted, the Railway Department was not making any profit on the haulage of wood from Kurrawang to the mines. From figures which I got in reply to a question yesterday, I find that in the year prior to the concession being granted, the revenue was £23,623, while in the year following the concession it was £12,614, or a difference of £11,000. I do not say that is all loss, because of course the Government will save the cost of hauling the wood.

The Premier: Pretty costly too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but I am justified in saying that some considerable loss was made. However, I am not complaining particularly about that, because the Government felt they would be justified in granting that concession and so losing trade on the Government line, in order to effect the settlement of a dispute which then existed. However, it was a concession to this company. Now this company has cut out the bush where it has been operating, and finds itself compelled to go down beyond Coolgardie for its supplies. That meant it would have to haul its wood over a section of the Government railways from Kurrawang to Coolgar-

die, a distance of 15 miles 30 chains. And, having been encouraged no doubt by favourable consideration on previous occasions, the company approached the Government with a view to leasing the line.

The Premier: Not the Government, the Commissioner of Railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will have something to say about that. The company was out to get further concessions. The Government have now given a lease for three years of one of the roads to this State. That it may be relieved of the charge for hauling firewood over the Government section the company has leased the section for £2,000 per annum. For that £2,000, the Government are going to bear the cost of maintenance, interest, and sinking fund and all charges.

Mr. Mann: They would have to pay that in any case.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but it is safe to say the concession to the company is worth anything from £16,000 to £18,000 per annum. That is the sum the Government will lose by the granting of this lease. The Minister says the Commissioner granted the lease. In reply to a question we have been told that the lease is granted under Section 64 of the Government Railways Act, 1904. Sections 63 and 64 come under part VI. of the Act, headed "Sidings." Under Section 63 the Commissioner may grant permission to any person to construct a siding, subject to certain conditions. Section 64 provides that the Commissioner may agree with the person constructing a siding that any trains or rolling stock of the department may be run upon the siding, and that any rolling stock the property of such person may be run on the Government railway on such terms and conditions as may be agreed to. This section deals entirely with the right to construct sidings, the right of the Government to run their rolling stock over the private sidings, and the right of the individual to use the Government railways in connection with the siding. This lease has been granted under Section 64 of the Act. The section goes on to provide that no such agreement shall have effect for more than three years from the date thereof, and that such agreements may provide for the payments to be made by the one party to the other party of such rates of charges as are fixed in that behalf. If it was proposed to grant a lease at all, it seems to me that it could have been more fittingly granted under Section 57. This section comes under Part V. of the Act, which deals with the leasing of railway property.

Mr. Mann: What is the length of railway leased?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Fifteen miles, 30 chains.

Mr. Mann: It looks to be a good deal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How can the hon. member say that? I will show him what sort of a deal it is when I quote the figures. It is a good deal for Hedges and the Kurrawang company.

Mr. Mann: Would not it be a good deal if we got £2,000 a year profit on all our miles of railway?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not profit. The hon. member first pronounces judgment and then shows how much he is acquainted with the deal by suggesting that it will mean a profit of £2,000 a year to the Government. The department will have to maintain the line.

Mr. Teesdale: The amount will clear it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It will not. It would be a good deal if the profit were £2,000 and the lessee had to bear the cost of maintenance and all charges.

Mr. Willcock: And then it would not much more than cover interest.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I intend to quote the interest charges and costs. This lease should have been granted under Section 57 and not under Section 64 of the Act, and I think I shall be able to show the reason why Section 64 was stretched in order to grant the lease. I do not say there was no power under Section 64, but the section certainly was stretched. Section 57 states—

The Commissioner may, with the approval of the Governor, from time to time let on lease any portion of a railway, with the rolling stock and other appurtenances thereto belonging, to any person willing to take and work the same subject to the following conditions: (1) The letting shall be by public tender. (2) The terms and conditions of the lease shall be laid before Parliament not less than 30 days before tenders are called for.

Then follow several other conditions. If the lease had been granted under Section 57, tenders must have been called and the agreement would have been subject to the approval of this House. The agreement or lease has been granted and Parliament has no control; having been granted under Section 64, it is a matter entirely within the discretion of the Commissioner. Therefore, under that part of the Act which deals with sidings only, the Commissioner has leased this portion of our railways to this much-favoured company. I view with very considerable suspicion and distrust the action of the Railway Department in having agreed to the favoured conditions which the Kurrawang woodline company have been able to extract from them.

Mr. Troy: And so do the people generally.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have cause to. When the department two years ago deliberately gave away revenue in order to grant a concession to this company.

The Premier: That was not the Commissioner.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but here we have on the main Government line, between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, one section measuring 15 miles 30 chains leased to this individual in order that he might make a saving for the year of something like £16,000. Let us see whether this is a good deal for the Government or not. The Government are bearing all the costs and all the responsibility. From

the latest annual report of the department we find that the maintenance of the railways and buildings amounted to £144 per mile, and the interest amounted to £203 per mile, a total of £347 per mile. If we multiply that figure by 15 miles 30 chains, we find that the maintenance, permanent way and buildings and interest charges on this distance of line amounts to £5,345 for the year.

Mr. Richardson: For the double or single line?

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the basis of the department's figures, that is for the single line.

Mr. Willecock: That represents the charges for every mile of line whether single or double.

Mr. Mann: That includes the double line?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, it does not. In respect of these charges, amounting to £5,345, the Government are to get a return of £2,000. That is the good deal which the Commissioner has made. Of course, it will be contended by the department that, while the cost for interest and maintenance combined, spread over the whole service, amounts to £347 a mile, it would not amount to this sum on this particular section. It is true that the cost of maintenance on some sections would be much heavier than on others. Where a road is not used very frequently, the cost of maintenance would not be so great as on a road in the city area over which heavy traffic passes frequently.

The Premier: To say nothing of the interest on a line not needed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Government were going to pull up the line. The Kurrawang company would have had to pay 2s. 8d. per ton for the haulage of their firewood and, on the basis of 145,000 tons of firewood hauled last year, the Railway Department would have received by way of freight £18,000.

The Premier: They would have put down their own line.

Mr. McCallum: That business is lost to the railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; they have deliberately given away, in return for a sum of £2,000, business which would have brought in £18,000 a year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And the Government are responsible for the repairs.

Mr. Mann: Would not there have been the cost of running the trains to deduct from the £18,000? There is no cost at all now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not saying they have lost an actual profit of £18,000, for the cost of the service would have to be deducted from that, but a profit would be shown.

Mr. Mann: It is doubtful.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Does that mean that our railway management is so incompetent that it is hauling firewood at a loss?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why do they not lease the whole lot if they lease one section; the principle is the same?

Hon. P. COLLIER: On what basis was the Commissioner working when he fixed the

price at £2,000? Did he make a blind guess? Why not £1,000 or £3,000? He must have made up some estimate as to the total tonnage that would have to be hauled, for that would effect the cost of maintenance.

Mr. Richardson: Was a profit or a loss made on this particular section last year?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That would have no bearing on the question. Even if there was a loss last year there would have been a profit this year if the company had been compelled to haul 145,000 tons. The company would have had to pay 2s. 8d. per ton on 145,000 tons of firewood hauled over this section.

Mr. Money: That is what the mines would have to pay; it would be passed on.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How do we know that? Members are always ready, by exercising their ingenuity, to find an explanation for this sort of thing.

Mr. Money: When a duty is imposed on a thing it is usually passed on.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that one of these companies, on a paid up capital of £19,000, made a profit in one year of £27,000.

Mr. Latham: Make the managing director the Commissioner.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He is a pretty shrewd gentleman, as is evidenced by this lease. He would, I believe, make a better job of managing the railways than some of those who are in charge of them to-day.

Mr. A. Thomson: He would need a little more freedom than the present Commissioner.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He has absolute freedom.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has too much. The whole management and control of the railways have been placed in his hands by Act of Parliament. Apparently he can lease any section of the Government railways that he pleases without reference to his Minister. I do not believe that this lease was made without the approval of the Minister.

The Premier: He consulted him.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is no doubt he had power to do it, had he pleased, but no Commissioner would dare to make such a departure from the usual practice without ministerial approval. Why is this company able to get such a concession? Why did not the Commissioner say to the company, "Haul your goods over the system and pay the usual freight"? There are many men carrying on business in the country who would be glad to lease a section of the railways from the department at an annual rental instead of paying the ordinary freight upon their goods.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are not using the whole of the 15-mile section to haul the 145,000 tons.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The 15-mile section is from Coolgardie to Kurrawang and the company is using that, but when they come to Kurrawang they branch off to their own private line, and go the remainder of the distance on that. They have the complete use of the line for three years, and the Government undertake to pay the whole cost of main-

tenance and upkeep. If anything happened, such as a washaway, which would involve expenditure up to, say, £1,000 or £2,000, that would have to be borne by the Government. Any unforeseen thing may happen during the term of the lease, and the Government would have to foot the Bill.

Mr. McCallum: If there was any delay in the trains would the Government be liable?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole transaction opens up a new phase in railway management. We shall have numbers of people, farmers and others, forming themselves into co-operative companies or societies, and, in order to avoid paying freight over the system, obtaining a lease of a certain section of it at an annual rental.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Certain powers are now given in connection with the handling of our wheat in bulk.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That affects the whole system. This is the first time that this particular principle has been adopted in the history of our railway system. Why has there been this departure from the beaten track? Why did the Commissioner not inform the company that they must do what other people do, send their goods over the Government system and pay the usual freight? This is the only company in the State to enjoy this privilege. Everyone else has to pay the usual charge. The Commissioner is either wholly incompetent, or he is evasive, and will not give the necessary information to Parliament. He was asked the other day what the estimated tonnage per year was that would be hauled by this company over the section concerned. His answer was that that would depend on the consumption of the mines. Apparently he has made no estimate as to quantities. If he has no idea of the tonnage that is likely to be hauled over the section, how could he estimate the cost of maintenance. What basis did he go upon in arriving at the figure £2,000? He must have made some estimate of the tonnage and worked out his costs and said to himself "If I do not grant this lease, and I compel the company to pay the usual rates I shall receive so much tonnage for the year; that will cost so much to haul and my profit and loss will be so much." If he had not made such a calculation he would be unfit for his position.

The Premier: 141,000 tons were hauled last year. That was the total Kurrawang supply.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apparently the Commissioner had no idea what the company were likely to haul over this section. What enabled him to fix the rental at £3,000? One would say he was not concerned, that £2,000 suffices for him, although on the basis of the cost of maintaining the system, and taking into account the interest on the outlay, the figure may be over £5,000 a year; but he says to the company, "You can have the lease for three years at £2,000 a year," although it may mean a profit, a saving, to this company of £18,000 in freight. Instead of paying the Railway Department £18,000 a year, they pay £2,000

a year. A nice little gift! Even deducting the company's cost of haulage, it must still mean a gift to them of £10,000 or £12,000 per annum.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And then the department raise suburban fares to make up the difference.

Mr. McCallum: And sack railway men.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, throw men on an unemployed labour market, in order that this company may pay higher dividends. I am not prepared to allow such a principle to be introduced without protest. At the end of this discussion, I intend to move for a reduction of the vote by way of protest against the principle. I am not going to allow the Minister to say that any influential or wealthy friend can come along and obtain a concession of this kind, involving such heavy loss to the State revenue. I must enter my protest against such a proceeding, and see whether the members of this Committee will endorse it. Where will this principle lead us to? What does it open the door to when men who have occasion to use the railways to an extent involving very large sums of money are able to go along to a Minister and get a concession of this description from him? It was done in a nice quiet way, too. It was not considered of sufficient importance to be mentioned in a Press paragraph. Day after day do we read how a Minister changes the name of a street, or does some small administrative act. These things are considered of sufficient importance to warrant a public announcement through the Press. But this important concession was granted without any member of the public knowing anything about it until the people on the goldfields began to see the concession operating, and wrote to their members. Thereupon the information was tardily and with difficulty dragged out by questions. And even then the Commissioner of Railways evaded one question that was asked of him through the Minister. Let me point out again that this important transaction was not thought worth a Press announcement. Had it been something that the Minister was proud of, or something that he thought might bring him a little kudos, it would have been trumpeted by the Press throughout the length and breadth of the country. Ministers are not a bit backward in doing publicity stunts when there is any kudos to be gained. But this matter, which it was known would rouse a storm of dissent on the goldfields, was hushed up and kept back—a secret contract. I have sat in this House year after year and heard abuse heaped on me and on those then associated with me on the score of alleged secret contracts—because of acts not made known to the public. Here we have a secret contract with a vengeance! A secret contract involving an entirely new departure in our railway administration, and no one knows anything about it! I

content that this business constitutes a downright scandal. I want to know why Mr. Hedges and his Kurrawang Company are so specially favoured, why they are not made to pay for the haulage of their goods in the same way as I am and all other citizens are compelled to do. I feel perfectly certain that a section of the railway system would not be handed over to me or to any other citizen, generally speaking.

The Premier: This section was to be pulled up, you know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and the rails in it were badly wanted too. But it was known that the Kurrawang Company required that section. When the company found that they were cut out, and would have to use this section for the transport of 145,000 tons of firewood, the Government knew they could not pull it up. The pulling up was contemplated only when it was believed that the section was not needed.

The Premier: The rails were needed elsewhere, and the line was not needed there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The line was needed. After the Kurrawang Company had decided that they must shift their operations, the line was needed. I have no hesitation in saying that the body of taxpayers in this country are going to be compelled to make up a loss on the maintenance of that section. Certainly the £2,000 a year will not cover the cost of maintenance and interest on construction, to say nothing at all about sinking fund. The citizens generally will be further taxed to meet the loss. Even if the £2,000 did cover the actual cost, so that the State would not suffer an immediate and direct loss, why should not the charge have been fixed at such an amount as would show a considerable profit to the Railway Department? The Kurrawang Company could well have afforded to pay £5,000 a year for the use of the section, and then would have shown a material saving on what they would have had to pay by way of ordinary freights. At £5,000 a year the deal would have been a better one for the State, would have shown a profit to the State, and at the same time it would have been a good deal for the company, who would also have shown a profit on it. The finances of the country are showing a deficit month by month, and the State is practically—though I do not like saying this—on the edge of things, so that we do not know what is going to happen; and yet this generous Minister for Railways, in the kindness of his heart, gives such a concession to this wealthy company for a period of three years! The company have made more money out of the business of supplying the mines with firewood than most gold mining companies there have made out of mining. The company have a paid-up capital of £19,000, and they possess rolling stock and plant and equipment, every penny of the cost of which has been met out of profits, equal in value to about £100,000. All this has been purchased out of profits, by

a company with an original capital of £19,000, with not another pound put in since.

Mr. Teesdale: How long have the company been operating?

Hon. P. COLLIER: For more than 20 years. The company have had a contract for the supply of firewood to the mines for about a quarter of a century.

Mr. Mann: Mr. Hedges has spent a lot of money in this country.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; he is a good citizen in that respect. It is safe to say that he has spent between £50,000 and £60,000 on a farm in a particular district. I do not grudge him the profits which he has legitimately made in the conduct of his business; but there is no reason whatever why the State should grant him a splendid concession, should undertake to bear losses in order that his company might earn larger profits. The departure is such an entirely new one that it calls for the strongest possible protest. I object to it altogether, and I object to the way in which it was done, and I object to the whole of the surrounding circumstances, and also to the atmosphere of the thing.

Mr. Teesdale: Was it done to avert a crisis up there with the mines?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The Kurrawang Company have a contract with the mines running now, and there is no talk of a crisis. The question of firewood supplies to the mines was not involved.

Mr. Mann: But the mines had no stocks in hand; they had to depend on supplies from day to day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Surely firewood can be hauled over a Government owned line as well as a Government leased line! The price of wood did not enter into the question at all. This principle of influential citizens being able to obtain leases of Government property in such a fashion ought to be stopped.

12 o'clock midnight.

Mr. Teesdale: It is a rotten state of affairs if it can be proved.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have given the Committee the facts. I say that they stretched the Act to give that right under Section 54 instead of under Section 57. Under the latter section, Parliament would have had to review the question and consented to the proposition. Instead of giving the concession under that section, they gave it under the section dealing with sidings. If Mr. Pope, as Commissioner of Railways, has inaugurated his occupancy of his present position by tactics such as this, he will get himself into trouble before his time has expired.

Mr. A. Thomson: He has had a good bit of trouble already.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has looked for it. He is looking for more if he is responsible for this position. I do not hold him responsible.

Mr. A. Thomson: He has had little else but trouble since he has been in that position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has brought a lot of it on himself. That is my opinion.

Mr. A. Thomson: I will express my opinion in a little while.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the hon. member will express his own opinion and not the opinions officially given to him. The hon. member generally holds a brief for other people.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He does not hold much of a brief for the Premier!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps he holds a brief for Hedges or the Commissioner in this case. I do not know who is responsible for the position which has been created, but whoever is responsible, should be censured. I will endeavour to ensure the person responsible by moving later on for a reduction of the vote.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [12.3]: Railway matters require a good deal of consideration at the hands of the Committee. I cannot understand why the actual cost is charged up against the railways and why the working of the railways is expected to meet interest and sinking fund. That aspect is well worth consideration. The railway fares and freights to-day are such as to make the railways unpopular with the people who should utilise them. Very little consideration is extended to the travelling public under the existing conditions. We have an important junction at Merredin, and yet the connection between trains is probably the worst in the world. The departmental heads say it cannot be altered. The position is ridiculous. If any private company owned the railways the position would be quickly rectified, and the running of the trains would be so altered that the present long wait would be obviated. I desire to reply to one or two points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that no extra freight had been charged on the carriage of superphosphate. I happen to be one of those unfortunate people who have to pay, and therefore I know that there has been an increase of 10s. per ton on super.

Hon. P. Collier: Since when?

Mr. LATHAM: Since the war broke out. It was probably while I was away. But the fact remains that the freight has been increased to that extent.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Over what distance?

Mr. LATHAM: To our particular district, it would be about 200 miles. Regarding the freight on super, the concession was made out of consideration for the utilisation of the empty trucks which had to be sent up to load wheat. The fact that the trucks had to be forwarded empty enabled the Railway Department to carry super conveniently at that period at the concession rate. The farmers would not have taken delivery of super at that time had it not been for this concession. They would have waited until they required the super to put in the ground, before they would have ordered it by rail.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The increase works out at .54d. per ton mile or about $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Mr. LATHAM: At any rate, the increase was levied. Another question which should receive consideration relates to the freight on timber. We can purchase a lot of timber for building purposes from the State saw-mills, but the freight on that timber is higher than the cost of the timber itself at the mills. This means that we can purchase timber cheaper than we can carry it over the railways from the mills to the farm. We should consider our public utilities more and make them popular. If we reduced fares and freights, we would bring in more revenue than is possible by increasing them. The railways would be used to a greater extent and greater services would be rendered than is the position to-day. The policy of the Government should be in the direction of decreasing rather than increasing fares and freights. I trust the Minister will endeavour to arrange a better junctioning of trains at Merredin so that people will not have to wait for hours during the night, and will see that the junction is made at Merredin instead of the trains passing one another a few miles further along the line.

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [12.7]: I want to express my sincere regret that the Leader of the Opposition has used his position on the floor of the House to attack a railway servant.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He did no such thing.

Mr. Marshall: It was you he attacked.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. P. Collier: You are a skunk to try to put it on the railway officer. That is equal to you.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I demand a withdrawal!

The CHAIRMAN: Order, the member for Katanning has—

Hon. P. Collier: I withdraw.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I commend the Leader of the Opposition for the excellent spirit he has shown and also for his attack upon an official.

Hon. P. Collier: I rise to a point of order. I demand a withdrawal of that statement. I did not attack any officials. I made my attack on the right source; I have too much admiration for the official.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I withdraw the statement. The Leader of the Opposition said it was an unheard of thing for a railway officer or an official of the Railway Department to come here to assist the Premier in his utterance, and to give him information. Did the Leader of the Opposition make that statement or not?

Hon. P. Collier: "Should be asked to supply information to a private member" is what I said. It is unheard of.

Mr. A. THOMSON: With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, I maintain that the official did not commit a crime.

Mr. Marshall: That was not suggested.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not accuse the official of a crime. I made no attack upon the officer.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It shows the rotten case the Leader of the Opposition had to put up when he was afraid—

Hon. P. Collier: Afraid?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, afraid that information would be supplied might prove him to be wrong.

Hon. P. Collier: Is a railway officer paid to supply a party politician with arguments?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I did expect a man occupying the position of Leader of the Opposition to see that his statements were at least correct.

Hon. P. Collier: So they are.

Mr. A. THOMSON: They are not. The Leader of the Opposition said distinctly that the freights had not increased on super or wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not. The hon. member should himself make correct statements.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is what the hon. member said.

Hon. P. Collier: I did no such thing. You should withdraw that statement.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I will withdraw.

Hon. P. Collier: You are making incorrect statements all along.

The CHAIRMAN: Order, the Leader of the Opposition says that he did not make such a statement.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I will withdraw "wheat." The Leader of the Opposition stated that the freight on super had not been increased. I say the freight has been increased.

Hon. P. Collier: Where did you get your information?

Mr. A. THOMSON: From the railway official. I was sure that the freight had been increased, and all I did was to ask that official whether certain information was correct. If the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition is correct, why should he cavil?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why cannot you look at the railway report and get your information from that?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Because I do not choose.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, you are too damned lazy!

Mr. Marshall: Because he has not enough intelligence for that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have a little more than the hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. A. THOMSON: I regret the Leader of the Opposition should have seen fit to attack me. Of course, if he thinks I am wrong, he is entitled to do that, but I regret that unwittingly I should have directed his wrath on to the official.

Hon. P. Collier: In a point of order: I am not going to permit the hon. member to say I attacked any official or poured any

wrath upon him. I insist upon a withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Kaitiaki knows that the Leader of the Opposition has already denied that statement.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have accepted his denial.

The CHAIRMAN: Then why do you keep on repeating the charge?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am sorry I repeated it, and I regret the Leader of the Opposition should be so much upset by it. He said the farming community were receiving enormous concessions for which they should be paying. The farming community are paying and have paid more than their fair share. They have developed the country, and they have to pay heavy railway freights on their commodities. The member for York (Mr. Latham) has pointed out that in some cases, particularly in respect of face-cuts, the freight costs more than the timber carried. It has become fashionable with the Leader of the Opposition and others to belabour those I have the honour to represent.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not belabour them.

Mr. A. THOMSON: You have dealt pretty severely with them. I take no exception to the hon. member's charge against me that I do not get my own information, but at least I am entitled to defend myself.

Hon. P. Collier: I don't object to that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am glad of that, although, of course, it makes no difference to my attitude. There has been an increase of 2s. per ton on super, plus the super tax.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has increased 12 points.

Mr. A. THOMSON: And other parcels of goods have increased too.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But not proportionately.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No, but the wheat—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Has increased six points.

Mr. A. THOMSON: In respect of most commodities the railway freights in the metropolitan area are infinitesimal as compared with those in agricultural districts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In the metropolitan area freights are paid for the whole of the commodities.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Railway Department derives very little benefit from goods carried between Fremantle and Perth. The great bulk of the goods is brought up either by river or by road.

Mr. McCallum: That is not very complimentary to the Railway Department.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Obviously it is very much cheaper to take goods from the Customs at Fremantle, put them on a lorry and run them direct to the warehouse in Perth, than to put them on the railways and have to cart them from the railways to the warehouse at the Perth end. I object to these continual charges that one section of the community is getting enormous advantages. An analysis of the railway returns shows that the great bulk of the revenue is

contributed by country people, who have not the facilities enjoyed in the metropolitan area. A journey of 12 miles in country districts costs more than the same journey in the metropolitan area. It has been said that the freights on those other goods should be increased. Yet hon. members were consistent in their opposition to me when I was desirous of having certain returns placed on the Table. I did succeed in getting one return from the Railway Department, which showed that the cost of privilege tickets to the end of June, 1921, was £22,000.

Hon. P. Collier: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Despite the hon. member's dissent, I am prepared to accept the official figures. Free passes to railway employees cost £93,000, free passes over interstate lines cost £7,600, and the cost of annual holidays was £8,000. We do not hear very much about curtailing the privileges enjoyed in the Railway Department, although we hear a good deal about curtailing the privileges enjoyed by the public. I hold no brief for the Commissioner of Railways, but we must remember that he is in a very difficult position, administering the largest spending department, of which, after all, he has no more control than has any private member. Can the Commissioner regulate the rate of wages he has to pay?

Mr. McCallum: Can any other employer in the city?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Was he responsible for the strike that occurred?

Mr. McCallum: Yes, he was, largely. I will have something to say about that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: And the hon. member will doubtless prove to his own satisfaction that the Commissioner was in the wrong and was absolutely responsible.

Mr. McCallum: I will prove that he had a lot to do with it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Commissioner of Railways is filling a very difficult position. He took charge of the railways when the engine power and rolling stock had been run so low as to almost bring the system to a standstill. He has had to meet increased wages and salaries, and it has been humanly impossible for him or anyone else to obtain very much better results than are being obtained. He has no power to sack a man. If a man is sacked, there is a right of appeal.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That has been so for years.

Mr. McCallum: He has the right to retrench and there is no right of appeal in that case.

Hon. P. Collier: He has put off a lot of men lately.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I understand that some 600 men have been put off.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And some of the cases are very hard indeed.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Such hardships must necessarily occur. After a man has been working in a certain department for a great number of years, it is a hardship for him to be put off. I was interested in the statement of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willecock),

by which he laboriously endeavoured to prove that 44 hours work a week would lead to more effective results than 48 hours work. I had the pleasure of meeting some of the men employed in the Midland Junction Workshops when the new system was inaugurated. I remarked that it was gratifying to know that the men in the workshops had guaranteed that more work would be done in the 44 hours than was previously done in the 48 hours. One of the workmen, a very competent man who has been employed there for a number of years replied, "I do not know very much about that, but I do know that the machines run at a certain rate all day, and I do not know that you will get any more work out of them by cutting out four hours work a week. I am thinking that, by the time the end of the week arrives, there will be at least the equivalent of four hours difference in the work."

Mr. Willecock: You cannot get away from the figures in the report.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is all very well for the member for Geraldton to argue that men can do as much in 44 hours as in 48 hours.

Mr. Willecock: I did not say that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If a man is working on a machine, the machine can do only a certain amount of work in a given time. If we cut four hours off the working time of that machine, it naturally follows that the output of the machine must be less. If a railway train can cover a certain mileage in 48 hours running, it is impossible to do the same run in 44 hours. The hon. member's contention is absurd.

Mr. Willecock: Fresh men can always do better work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Of course everyone, except the hon. member, is absurd.

Mr. A. THOMSON: There are some things about which I do happen to know a little.

Hon. P. Collier: Because you are always trotting around to Government officials for information.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Even if I am—

Hon. P. Collier: You have no right to do it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You thought you were going to be a Minister and you had the greatest slip-up of your life.

Hon. P. Collier: You were running around to the Commissioner of Taxation the other day. These officials are not paid to supply information to party politicians. I will move a motion to block that sort of thing.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am not dealing with party politicians; I am dealing with the Government railways.

Hon. P. Collier: I hope the Premier will instruct his officials not to supply information for party political purposes.

Mr. A. THOMSON: One cannot fail to be amused at the interjections of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Premier: The officials are not supposed to supply it.

Hon. P. Collier: But the hon. member is always offending.

Mr. A. THOMSON: May I remind the Leader of the Opposition that, when one

has not a good case, it is easy to abuse the other side.

Hon. P. Collier: You did not get that from a departmental officer. You thought that out yourself.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Leader of the Opposition dealt at length with the wonderful concessions which the farming community have received.

Hon. P. Collier: Only on one item.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, a wonderful concession.

Hon. P. Collier: I never touched on anything else.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Quite so. I wish to refer to a speech I made on the occasion when the Minister for Mines spoke on the Address-in-reply. I pointed out that the Sandstone-Mount Magnet line of 93 miles carried in six months 37 passengers and 32 tons of goods. The total of the passenger fares collected was £18 and a little over £1,000 was collected by way of freights on the goods. A trifle over £1,000 represented the whole of the earnings on that particular line for six months. I regret that these fields have declined to such an extent. The Bullfinch railway, in a period of six months, carried 250 passengers and earned £30 in fares, while the goods carried totalled 540 tons, representing in freights £250. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to criticise one section of the community because they are getting a certain class of goods carried over the railways at a cheap rate. In every country of the world manures are carried over the railways at a cheap rate, because it is considered sound business from a railway point of view to do so. No other class of goods carried by the department tends to increase the earning capacity of the railways so greatly, or to create so much employment. During the wheat season the railways work at high pressure. The trucks are unloaded quickly and there are no delays. Some members have stated that wheat is not a paying freight, but I know that the Premier, and other members of the Government, and the Railway Department, will be very glad indeed when the wheat season is in full swing, because it will mean that the State will get a better return from its railways than it has had during the past few months. I deplore the attitude adopted by the Leader of the Opposition in this connection. I regret his statement that I must be a friend of Mr. Hedges, and that I was supporting that gentleman. The information which the hon. member supplied to the Committee was news to me and, on the facts before me, I have not been able to decide whether the agreement is good or bad business. According to the case made out by the Leader of the Opposition, the deal certainly was not in the best interests of the department. I am not in a position to judge, and

like to hear the other side of the case before condemning a man.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You were very fond of condemning him previously.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Not more so than anyone else. Closer administration is required. How we are going to make our railways pay is one of the biggest problems we have to face. I agree with the Minister when he says that our railway freights have practically reached the maximum. The metropolitan fares have been somewhat increased.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Only 100 per cent.

Mr. A. THOMSON: There are other increases as well.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Wheat, .6.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Other commodities are affected, and this affects the consumer very considerably. Unless we can grow our wheat and ship it on the same basis as other parts of the Commonwealth we shall not grow the same quantity of wheat, and then there will be less work for the men the hon. member represents. Let us assume there may be a small loss to the railway so far as the carriage of wheat is concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Minerals, coal and garden produce are primary products, and they have never had a chance.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No doubt the hon. member can prove to his own satisfaction that the freight on wheat should be increased, as well as on superphosphate and other things.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There should not be any favouritism.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not know that there has been any. When one considers the conditions under which many of the farmers have had to develop their industry, and compare that with the comparative affluence of people in the metropolitan area, it must be admitted that they are entitled to some consideration.

Mr. Mann: There is not much affluence.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Probably not. There are many men in my district who have very little to show for all their years of labour.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The hon. member has done better since he left the metropolitan area. That may be the reason why some others have not done so well.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I suppose I got that from some of the officers of the departments. I have roughed it and worked harder in the country than the hon. member, who has never done that, and who has been pretty snug all these years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I have worked a damned sight harder than the hon. member has ever done.

Mr. A. THOMSON: At times I feel it would be in the interests of the State if a select committee could be appointed to inquire into the administration of the Railway Department. There seems to be a certain amount of overlapping. I commend the Com-

missioner for having moved one step forward when he divided the railway system into districts. The great objection I have to the administration of the railways is that the district superintendents have not sufficient power. The department should be divided into distinct sub-departments. At present it is all run as one huge railway department. The Great Southern Railway should be made into one section and placed under the control of a district superintendent, who should be made the superintendent in reality. To-day everything is referred to Perth. I commend the Commissioner for endeavouring to get away from the system which is in vogue. As he has appointed a certain gentleman as assistant, better results may now be expected. It is true there has been a good deal of dissatisfaction shown over the appointment. The Commissioner has to sit in his office in Perth, and when something happened on the railways under the old system he had to hold an inquiry into the whys and wherefores. As everything had to come through the various officers, the information that reached the Commissioner was probably that which suited those who supplied the information. The Commissioner now has his own officer who can make inquiries direct and give the Commissioner the facts at first hand. I do not say I agree with all the acts of the Commissioner, but no matter who held the position, taking into account all that has occurred of late, I do not think the present Commissioner could have done better than he has. There should be more decentralisation in connection with the department. The railways should be divided into sections and an officer placed in charge of each. The Commissioner would then be able to compare the running costs of each section, and would probably achieve better results.

Mr. Teesdale: Would that mean further appointments?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The officers are already available, but everything has to be referred to Perth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Parliament refused to appoint three Commissioners, and now we have only one.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with superintendents. The system should be divided into districts, in the same way that a large store is divided into branches. The Commissioner would receive his returns from each section, and if the running costs were too great on any one section the superintendent of that section could be called to account for it. I think this system would meet with very much better results than we are getting to-day. We are urged not to offer destructive criticism. I commend this suggestion to the Government as being constructive criticism. No one regrets more than I do that the goldfields have not made better progress lately. I would suggest to the Premier that before Parliament closes he should obtain authority to pull up the Mt. Magnet-Sandstone and the Bullfinch railways, which are not paying, and make

use of the rails in some other part of the State. The Government could then provide a motor service to take the small amount of traffic that at present passes over these lines, retaining the present railway beds for the necessary roadways. I regret that there was any heat shown between the Leader of the Opposition and myself. I assure him that I never resent any personal criticism upon myself. I very much regret the incident that occurred. More particularly do I regret that I was the unwitting cause of bringing into the discussion a certain railway official. That must have been unpleasant both for him and, I think I may say, also for the Leader of the Opposition, just as it was for myself.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12.43 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 2nd December, 1921.

	Page
Questions: Railways, Arbitration Court Agent	2081
Drainage and Bore, Njookenboro	2082
Bills: Health Act Amendment, report	2082
Perth Hebrew Congregation Lands, 38., passed	2082
Constitution Act Amendment, (No. 2), 28.,	
Com. report	2082
Architects, Com.	2080
Land and Income Tax Assessment, Com. ...	2096
Constitution Act Amendment, Council's Amend-	
ment	2098
Courts of Session, Com., report	2100
Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders,	
28.	2101
Factories and Shops Act Amendment, Council's	
Amendments	2101

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, ARBITRATION COURT AGENT.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: What fees are being paid Mr. Poynton, the representative of the Commission of Railways in the Arbitration Court?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Railways) replied: For preparation of five cases, £105; for attendance at court, £10 10s. per day. These fees are divided between the Government Railways and the Midland Railway Company in the proportion which the working expenses of the Government Railways and the Midland Railway Company bear to each other, approximately 25 to 1.