

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 177—agreed to.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9:32 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 13th November, 1906.

	PAGE
Question: Phillips River Railway Project ...	2826
Bills: Roads and Streets Closure, 1a. ...	2826
Loan (£2,467,000), 1a. ...	2826
Federation Referendum, leave to introduce (opposed), debated, granted, 1a. ...	2826
Land Tax Assessment, Council's suggested amendments, debate as to procedure, conference proposal ...	2829
Annual Estimates: Mines Votes resumed, State Batteries etc., votes completed in extended sitting ...	2847
All-night Sitting on Mines Estimates ...	2855

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the TREASURER: 1, Report of University Endowment Trustees. 2, Report of Acclimatisation Committee for half-year.

By the PREMIER: Report of Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners for half-year.

QUESTION—PHILLIPS RIVER RAILWAY PROJECT.

MR. HOLMAN, without notice, asked the Premier: Will he place on the table a copy of the letter sent to England, and other correspondence, with reference to Mr Kaufman's statement about the proposed railway to Phillips River?

THE PREMIER replied: Yes.

BILLS—FIRST READING.

Roads and Streets Closure, introduced by the PREMIER.

Loan (£2,467,000), introduced by the TREASURER.

BILL—FEDERATION REFERENDUM.

AS TO WITHDRAWAL.

MR. F. MONGER (York) moved—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, whether the motion by the member for York is in order? Standing order No. 387 provides:—

It shall not be competent for a private member to move the House into a Committee of Supply or of Ways and Means, nor into a Committee of the whole House, for imposing any tax, indent, or impost, nor shall it be competent for a private member in any such Committee to propose increases on the amounts proposed therein.

The hon. member will have to move the House into Committee, in continuation of his motion. I should like to refer also to a ruling of a Speaker of this House, Sir James Lee Steere, on the 29th November, 1900, on a motion by Mr. Vosper that provision be made on the Estimates for a vote for the encouragement of prospecting:—

The SPEAKER regretted that he had overlooked the wording of this motion, or he would not have allowed it to be moved in its present form, because it proposed a direct sum to be placed on the Estimates; and it was not in the power of a private member to bring forward such a motion as that.

I submit that this motion will involve the placing of a sum on the Estimates in order to carry out its purpose, and is therefore out of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The observations of May, under the heading "Bills creating a Charge," are as follow:—

When the main object of a Bill is the creation of a public charge, resort must be had to this procedure before the Bill is introduced; and upon the report of the resolution of the Committee of the whole House thereon, the Bill is ordered to be brought in. If the charge created by a Bill is a subsidiary feature therein, resulting from the provisions it contains, the royal recommendation and preliminary Committee are not needed in the first

instance, and the Bill is brought in on motion. But before the clauses and provisions for the creation of incidental charges can be considered by a Committee on the Bill, those clauses and provisions must be sanctioned by the resolution of a Committee appointed upon the recommendation of the Crown and agreed to by the House; and in the presentation copies of the Bill, the clauses and provisions which create those charges are printed in italics, to mark that they do not form part of the Bill, and that no question can be proposed thereon unless vitality has been imparted to those provisions by a Committee resolution; and amendments to Bills which are not thus sanctioned are not proposed from the Chair, or, if agreed to inadvertently, are cancelled. The Speaker also has declined, in like manner, to put the question on an amendment which would have varied the incidence of taxation.

In these circumstances the Standing Orders do not yet come into force; that is to say until the Committee stage is reached it is quite within the province of any member to move so far as the hon. member now seeks to go. But before going into Committee a message from the Governor will necessarily have to be introduced. I rule that the hon. member is entitled to proceed as he now proposes, up to the Committee stage. Members will note it is provided in the passage quoted from *May* that those clauses or provisions which deal with taxation must necessarily be printed in italics, and therefore will not have any force until a message from the Governor precedes the Committee stage.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): I take it, then, the only means of getting the Bill into Committee is to bring down a message from the Governor, and that it is not necessary for the Government to announce their attitude until the second-reading stage has been reached.

THE SPEAKER: So long as a message is received from the Governor prior to the Committee stage, the Bill can take its course; but without a message from the Governor it cannot go beyond the second reading. The Government need not necessarily say now that they intend to procure a message. It is quite within the province of the mover (Mr. Monger), if he thinks the Governor will grant him a message of that nature, to ask for a message; but such a course would certainly be contrary to any precedent in this

House. The rule is for the Government to bring in messages of that nature, and therefore the hon. member must trust to what the Government may do to assist in the passage of his Bill through the House.

MR. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle): I should like your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether I should be in order in placing on the Notice Paper an amendment providing for a referendum to the whole of the electors of Western Australia qualified to vote at elections for members of the Legislative Assembly, on the question of the abolition of the Upper Chamber.

THE SPEAKER: That would be irrelevant at this stage of the Bill. The hon. member can at a later stage give notice of any amendment which is relevant to the measure. Farther than that it is quite within the right of any member to raise any objection to the introduction of this measure. The motion for the first reading cannot be debated, but this motion is open to debate. The question is that leave be given to introduce the Bill.

MR. BATH: The point I desired your ruling on was the right of a private member to introduce a Bill which imposes a charge upon the public revenue. The ruling a previous Speaker gave when a motion was moved by Mr. Vosper was that it was not within the province of a member to move such a motion. I will quote *May* on this question. It is stated on page 527—

Every motion which in any way creates a charge upon the public revenue must receive the recommendation of the Crown before it can be entertained by the House.

Again it states—

A petition praying directly or indirectly for an advance of public money or for a charge upon the revenues will only be received if recommended by the Crown.

On page 530 it says—

The principle that the sanction of the Crown must be given to every grant of money drawn from the public revenue applies equally to the taxation levied to provide that revenue. No motion can therefore be made to impose a tax save by a Minister of the Crown, unless such tax be in substitution, by way of equivalent for taxation at that moment submitted to the consideration of Parliament.

The one is on a par with the other. No motion therefore can be moved which imposes a tax, save by a Minister of the Crown. I submit that the member for York, being a private member, cannot introduce this motion. In giving leave to the member to introduce the motion we are entertaining it. On page 532 of *May* it provides that the principle of taxation applies equally, and the motion cannot be moved except by a Minister of the Crown. In carrying out that ruling, the previous Speaker stated that it was not within the power of a private member to bring forward a motion that would impose a charge on the public revenue.

MR. SPEAKER: I rule that the passing of this motion and the motion for the second reading of the Bill have no force until a message, which the member or one of the Ministers would have the right to bring forward if thought fit, has been brought forward. There will be no charge on the taxation of the country until we reach the Committee stage.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I think we ought to have an assurance from the Government of their intention whether they intend to support the motion before we proceed with it. If the Government do not intend to assist the hon. member, what is the use of proceeding with the motion? But if they intend to assist the hon. member in obtaining a message, then the motion is debatable.

MR. SPEAKER: That is a matter in the hands of the Government.

THE PREMIER: I understand the hon. member is not desirous of knowing what the Government intend to do until he has advanced certain arguments in his second-reading speech. I did intend to make a statement in regard to this matter. I understood this would be a purely formal stage, and that it was perfectly competent at a later stage for the Government to make an announcement as to their intentions in regard to this matter.

MR. WALKER: I have no desire to oppose the hon. member's Bill; but a motion that is informal at any stage is informal *ab initio*. If the member is out of order

now, as he is I submit without a message and without a promise from the Government to obtain a message for him, it is no use proceeding with the motion; and the confidence we may have in debating the matter all depends on the Bill being in order throughout all its stages. If at any stage it can be thrown out, all our efforts will be futile. Speaking for myself, I desire to expend no energy and to have no waste of time on a measure that may be utterly frivolous; that is, which may come to nothing. If the Government intend to support the Bill, that may alter the attitude of members towards it; but if we are to have a debate such as may be brought before a debating society, and that it is not intended the Bill should become law, or that it shall become law at the change of mind of the Government at any stage, all the expenditure of energy by members is waste of time. At this stage we ought to know if the Government will or will not introduce the necessary message, because this matter ought to be in order now, and it cannot be until a message is brought forward.

THE PREMIER: I take it the ruling is that at the present time the motion is in order. On many occasions a message is not brought down until the second-reading stage of the Bill. I have said that I intended making a statement; but the mover is desirous of making his second-reading speech on this matter, and I am prepared to hold over the statement I have to make until the hon. member has made his speech.

MR. WALKER: There ought not to be any second-reading speech until the message is brought down.

THE PREMIER: But a message is often brought down after a second-reading speech has been made.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the member for Kanowna did not hear the passage which I quoted from *May*; if not, I will read it again. *May's* decision is that this motion is in order up to the Committee stage without a message. With that stage we cannot proceed without a message. It does not matter to the House or to me how the message comes, so long as it comes into my hands. As long as I have been in Parliament it has

been the custom for a Minister to bring a message from the Governor, and until we reach the stage when it is necessary for that message to be brought down, this motion will have no force or vitality. As the member for Kanowna has said, perhaps some time will be lost to the House; but all I am here for is to give my ruling, and I have given it, and I am prepared to substantiate it by quoting from *May*.

MR. WALKER: I have known many Bills to be ruled out of order at their initiative.

MR. SPEAKER: I must put the question, that leave be given to introduce the Bill.

Question passed on the voices.

Bill introduced, and read a first time.

BILL—LAND TAX ASSESSMENT.

COUNCIL'S SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS.

The Legislative Council having returned the Bill to the Assembly with amendments suggested to be made in six of the clauses, and the order of the day being read for consideration of the message—

THE TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson) said: I wish to inform the House that it is my intention, when in Committee, to submit a motion for a request to the Legislative Council for a conference on Message No. 25. The Land Tax Assessment Bill as passed by this House and transmitted to another place has now come back with several suggested amendments. The Bill having passed this House may be considered to embody the opinions of a majority of the members of this Chamber, and to have passed out of the region of party politics. Some of the amendments suggested by the Council are such I venture to say as a majority of the members of this House would not be prepared to agree to. I farther venture the opinion that it is the desire of members of this House to see the Bill passed into law as nearly as possible in the form in which it left this Chamber. I have every reason for believing that the Legislative Council will agree to the holding of a conference, this being the constitutional method for endeavouring to overcome difficulties which may arise between the two Chambers in re-

gard to proposed legislation. The managers to be appointed should go to the conference without having come to any hard and fast conclusions, in order that they may be able to negotiate and I hope obtain terms which will be acceptable to this House. When the report of the managers is afterwards submitted to this House, members will of course be fully at liberty to deal with the report as they deem fit in the best interests of the State; but I venture to suggest that if the report be at all unanimously agreed to by the managers, it will be well for this House to accept that report. On these grounds I move—

That Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair, for the purpose of going into Committee to consider Message No. 25 from the Legislative Council.

Question put and passed.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE TREASURER moved—

That a conference be requested with the Legislative Council on a Bill for an Act regulating the Assessment of Land for the purposes of Taxation; and that at such conference the managers for the Legislative Assembly consist of the five following members: The member for Bunbury (Hon. N. J. Moore), the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piesse), the member for Brown Hill (Mr. Bath), the member for Ivanhoe (Mr. Scaddan), and the Treasurer (Hon. Frank Wilson) as mover.

MR. BATH: The procedure now proposed was rather unsatisfactory, and a departure from the procedure adopted previously. This House had been accustomed to consider amendments made by the Legislative Council, and had either agreed to or dissented from them. Was this motion in order, in requesting a conference before the consideration of the amendments by this House?

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. Illingworth): The procedure was not regular; it was not what we had been accustomed to in this House; but it was within the Standing Orders for the Minister or member in charge of a Bill to move for a conference at any stage.

THE PREMIER: The reason for proposing the conference prior to discussion was in order that the managers might have a free hand, and thus be enabled if necessary to give way on certain points. If, however, certain of the amendments were accepted by this House in Com-

mittee and others were rejected, the managers for this House might then not be able to give way on certain points. If certain of the amendments were accepted here and others rejected, this House would have come down to bedrock as to what this House would be prepared to accept; consequently when the managers for this House met the other managers in conference, our managers might not be able to give way on certain amendments. There were certain of the amendments on which he was prepared to give way; but on one amendment he was personally not prepared to give way, that was as to the time limit for exemptions on conditional purchases.

MR. BOLTON: Then it was to be a one-sided conference.

THE PREMIER: No. The managers for this House would have a free hand, but should endeavour to have the Bill ultimately carried as nearly as possible in the form in which it left this House, irrespective of party or individual opinions. We had arrived at a stage when the Bill had passed out of the region of party politics, and it was our duty now to get the measure passed as nearly as we could in the form as we had sent it to the Council.

MR. BATH: The proposal would place some of the members proposed as managers in an invidious position, because the amendment made by another place having rendered the Bill infinitely more acceptable to himself, for instance, he would have to support the amendments.

THE PREMIER: The amendments had been suggested merely for the purpose of throwing out the Bill.

MR. BATH: Now the hon. member was imputing motives to members of another place. Were he (Mr. Bath) sent as a manager, he would have either to be false to this House which sent him to the conference, or be false to principles he had given expression to when the Bill was before this Chamber. No reasons had been advanced for departing from the procedure hitherto followed when Bills were sent back to this House with amendments, which hitherto were considered by this House in Committee and either agreed to or dissented from. If then another place insisted on its amendments, the Bill came back.

THE TREASURER: In this case another place could not insist on amendments: it could merely request.

MR. BATH: Then, as he was saying, we had a last opportunity of deciding whether to accept the amendments or lose the Bill, and then would be the time to consider the advisability of a conference. The Legislative Council had not exceeded its right in making this request; hence there could be no question of preserving the rights and privileges of this Chamber. If the Council desired to go beyond its powers he would be one of the first to protect the rights of this Assembly against infringement; but seeing that the Council had only exercised its due rights and powers, he did not feel inclined to break his principles and assist the Government in carrying their particular views. He thought the amendments made the Bill more acceptable, and he felt more inclined to accept them. Above all, if in order to make a fight we selected ground which did not give us a good basis for fighting, we had not the same arguments with which to fight another place at a time when perhaps the Council had exceeded its rights and privileges. In the circumstances he opposed the motion.

MR. WALKER: There was great danger in this departure. He questioned whether the Premier and the Treasurer, after reflecting on the course they had proposed, would not come to the conclusion that they were stultifying the Assembly. How did they know that all these amendments would not be accepted? They had no right to presume that every member of the Committee was at one with the Government; because on more mature consideration, the matter having been debated in another Chamber, and after having read the debates that took place in another place, it was quite possible that members might feel more inclined to agree to the amendments requested by the Council. At all events the conference must be *un dernier ressort*, the last step to take after the points of absolute disagreement between the two Houses had been stated. Until then, how could we know clearly the relations of the two Chambers? By the procedure of Parliament we were imperatively bound to exhaust every means of coming to terms before suggesting a

conference. The procedure suggested by the Premier stultified the Assembly altogether.

THE PREMIER: These amendments had come from another place at a period different from the usual, this being a Money Bill.

MR. WALKER: That did not enter the question. We had not as yet exhausted all other means of coming to terms. The Committee had not shown what amendments would be agreed to. How could any manager presume to be in cognisance with what every member of this Committee thought in regard to the Council's amendments? It was impossible. Moreover, from what the Premier said, we were humbling the Assembly. The Premier made out that if we went to this conference without debate we would capture the Council, or that the Council's managers would be more inclined to listen to us. What was the object in going now? Because we had said nothing, and the Council managers might be more inclined to listen to us. That was the opinion of the Premier. It was unwarranted for the Premier to arrive at such a conclusion.

THE PREMIER: There was a precedent for the step suggested in the conference that took place in regard to the Redistribution of Seats Bill.

MR. HOLMAN: No; everything was exhausted then.

MR. WALKER: The Premier's object was that the Assembly should go to the haughty lord in order to get some concession, and should not say one word, but should be quiet. In the case of the Redistribution of Seats Bill the then Premier, Mr. Walter James, in moving for managers to be appointed, pointed out that the Assembly had before them the views of the Council and the amendments which the Council considered should be insisted on. Mr. James said he believed the House was not prepared to accept all the amendments. Every course was taken to exhaust the question. A debate proceeded on the return of the Bill with amendments; the amendments were sent back another time, and again the Council sent back a message insisting on its amendments. It was reasonable then to hold a conference; but here we sug-

gested nothing. We simply, out of servility, were to send managers; we were to cease performing our functions as representatives of the people in the presence of the other Chamber. He had no desire to speak disrespectfully of the Council, but we must retain our rights. We should not, without consulting the Committee and without saying a word, go to another Chamber cap-in-hand; we should not go, sandals removed, to the holy of holies to get some slight consideration. That would be the wrong attitude to take up. It was a dangerous action we were entering on, and on that consideration alone we should not rush into a matter of this importance. If we set a precedent of this kind we should always be at the mercy of the Council, instead of the Council being on an equality with us. The Assembly represented the popular will, and he for one would not submit to the scorns the public would have a right to inflict upon him if he renounced his duties as a representative of the popular will, and had no word to say in order that we might get some slight concession from the Legislative Council. Reason should govern the land, and if we could not by reason and justice maintain our position, then we should give way to those who were more reasonable and just. We must also insist on the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, that we were forcing men to go to that conference who might entirely frustrate the object of the motion. If the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Ivanhoe were sent as managers, they would support the Council's amendments.

THE PREMIER: Then they would support the Council. They would accept the amendments.

MR. WALKER: That was the point. It had just begun to dawn on the Premier. We should first of all see whether the Committee would accept the amendments. The Premier should first consult this Committee, and when the Committee took a definite stand, if we could not agree with the Council's amendments, it was time to come to a compromise.

THE PREMIER: There would be nothing to confer upon then.

MR. WALKER: There was everything to confer about. If the Assembly took one position and the Council another,

there were two points of variance; but if we asked members who agreed to the Upper House amendments to go to the conference, there would be nothing to confer upon. The Committee should take a definite stand and say "These are the points at issue," and on those points at issue the conference should take place. That was the sensible way and the old way of doing business as the Constitution provided, and we should adopt it if we did not wish Parliament to be run haphazard according to the will that might spasmodically seize the Government benches.

THE CHAIRMAN: Clause 46 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1899 said:—

In the case of a proposed Bill which according to law must have originated in the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council may at any stage return it to the Legislative Assembly with a message requesting the omission or amendment of any items or provisions therein; and the Legislative Assembly may, if it thinks fit, make such omissions and amendments or any of them with or without modifications.

On an ordinary Bill, clearly the course suggested by the member for Kanowna was the correct one; but we were dealing with a Bill at a stage which, according to our Constitution Act, differed materially from the practice of the British House of Commons. The decision of the British House of Commons was absolutely final on a Money Bill; but in our Constitution we had introduced a section which permitted the Legislative Council to send, at any stage, a message requesting that certain alterations be made in the Bill. There was no precedent and no procedure laid down as to the order in which we should deal with a question at this stage. It seemed to him (the Chairman) that it would be better, if he might express an opinion, to follow in this case the same course as was taken with ordinary Bills; but that was for the Committee to decide. There was no procedure laid down. This section of our Constitution Act did not form part of the practice of the British House of Commons; consequently there could be no precedents from that source to guide us, and we had no precedent here because the point had not been raised before. The Committee might take the ordinary course to consider the amendments, return them to the Legis-

lative Council, and await their decision before we appointed managers to a conference.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Kanowna had said much about the rights of the Assembly, but in the whole of his speech one had not heard the hon. member point out in the slightest degree how we were infringing the rights of this House. He (the Minister) understood that managers sent to a conference went absolutely as free agents, and all they could do after conferring was to bring down recommendations to the several Chambers. He did not think it would be very derogatory on members opposite to have to meet members of the Legislative Council. He could not see how it would affect the privileges of the House.

MR. WALKER: There was a complete sacrifice of dignity.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member said that we would be abrogating certain rights.

MR. WALKER: It would be humiliating.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: One did not see where it came in. Not only the Government but members opposite were anxious that the Bill should pass into law. It was not always possible in connection with new measures to obtain all one desired. Legislation had frequently to be carried in a spirit of compromise. The Government thought it wise to arrange for members drawn from both sides of this House to meet members from another place in conference to ascertain if a compromise were possible in this case.

MR. WALKER: Why not first have a conference between the Opposition and the Government?

THE MINISTER: The Bill had been debated here at great length, and when it left this Chamber the voice of the House had been clearly expressed in connection with those clauses. The proposal to hold a conference was not in the slightest sense abrogating the rights, privileges, or prerogatives of this House. Believing there was a genuine desire on the part of members that the Bill should become law, he urged the Committee to agree to the proposed conference.

MR. FOULKES: Although, as pointed out by the Chairman, there was no pre-

cedent on which to act in this case, he well remembered that in the sessions of 1892-3-4 lengthy discussions took place in the Legislative Assembly on the question as to the advisability of discontinuing the grants-in-aid to denominational schools; and although no Bill was necessary to deal with that matter, the grants being included in the Annual Estimates, it was agreed that though this was essentially a financial matter, a committee from each House should be appointed to jointly discuss the question. That was done, with the result that a *modus vivendi* was arranged under which a lump sum was voted to the denominational schools, and the grants were discontinued. The present proposal for a conference was simply a short cut to a settlement, and there was no real objection to the course.

THE PREMIER: At this stage it might not be inopportune to quote the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition on a previous occasion. [Extract from *Hansard* read, showing that in speaking on a proposal to appoint managers to a conference in December 1903, to consider certain amendments desired by the Council in the Redistribution of Seats Bill, Mr. Bath argued that the Standing Orders having provided a means for settlement of disagreements between the Houses by means of a conference, it was the duty of the House to take advantage of that means after every other constitutional means had been tried and failed.] Mr. Hastie, on the same occasion, also supported the appointment of managers to the conference on similar grounds. The reason for proposing the conference on the present occasion instead of later was that the managers from this House would be in a position to meet the managers from another place with a free hand, and be able to give way if need be on one or two points, whereas if the Council's suggested amendments were first considered by this House and bed-rock was reached, those managers would not be able to give way in regard to provisions which this House was determined to maintain. Members who desired to see the Bill passed into law should support the motion.

MR. BUTCHER: The member for Claremont and the Premier had both kept as far as possible from the question.

During his parliamentary experience there had been many disagreements between the two Houses. On all such occasions the procedure followed was to consider the amendments and either agree to or dissent from them; and only as a last resource was a conference availed of, in order to see if there was any means of arriving at a settlement rather than lose the Bill. The present proposal, if not irregular, was very close to being so.

THE PREMIER: In those cases, the amendments came back after the Council had read the Bill a third time. That stage was not yet reached in this case.

MR. BUTCHER: Then we should have measures brought in that we knew would be agreed to. Until that course was adopted, the rights and privileges of this House should be maintained. This Committee had every right to discuss the suggested amendments, but the Government were evidently afraid they would be accepted here. Some of them he strongly favoured, and would vote against those of which he disapproved.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member disapproved of the Bill.

MR. BUTCHER: No; but he would support certain amendments which would save the Bill. The Bill would probably be knocked out by the conference. Perhaps that was what the Premier wanted. If so, why did not the Government allow the House to wreck the Bill in the first instance?

MR. BATH: The Premier should have quoted fairly the debate in 1903, when the procedure now recommended by the Opposition was adopted; for another place returned the Bill with amendments to the Assembly, which disagreed and gave reasons, and another place then insisted on the amendments. The Assembly had the choice of accepting the amendments, losing the Bill, or holding a conference. He (Mr. Bath) supported the latter proposal as a last resort. But now we had not exhausted the regular procedure, therefore he would not prematurely agree to appointing managers.

THE TREASURER: The Committee would have full opportunity of discussing the suggested amendments when the conference reported.

MR. WALKER: We claimed the right to agree or disagree now.

THE TREASURER: This was not an ordinary Bill such as the Redistribution of Seats Bill in 1903, which passed all its stages in another place and was returned to us with certain amendments. This was a Money Bill which had not yet reached its third reading in the Council, and that House now asked us to concur in certain suggestions. If we considered and rejected the amendments, the Council would not send down a farther request, but would proceed to the third reading stage, when the Bill would probably be lost. If members wished to see the Bill lost—[**MR. WALKER:** More threats]—no; the Bill was now outside of party politics, for it embodied the opinions of the Assembly. The measure was vital; hence we were justified in adopting any constitutional means to an amicable settlement. In adopting such means there could be no loss of dignity. Members could discuss the report when submitted. Oppositionists seized every opportunity of dealing a blow at the Government, and of altering a Bill carried here by a majority. Let us stand by the decision we had arrived at and agree to this reasonable motion, in order that the Bill as it now stood, or with the least possible alteration, might become law.

MR. WALKER: The Treasurer was hopelessly illogical. First he asked the Committee to stand by what they had done, and secondly to send managers from this House to see how much or how little they could alter what we had done. If, as he said, we could discuss every clause of the Bill after the conference, what harm could there be in an immediate discussion? Was not now the proper time? Why vary the usual order? If suggesting amendments were wrecking the Bill, would not the suggested amendments and alterations of the managers have the same effect? The managers could not go to a conference without directions from the House. We could not appoint irresponsible managers. Another place suggested over a dozen amendments. Perhaps the Committee might agree to nine, leaving say three to discuss. How foolish for the managers not to know whether the Assembly would agree to any of the amendments. This might produce a deadlock which could be avoided

if the amendments were first discussed, and would place the Committee, the managers, and the Council in a false position, altogether contrary to constitutional precedent. We must not abrogate our right to tell the Upper House which amendments were disagreed to. These would then be the only amendments which the managers would take up. They might have to discuss only one point of difference instead of a dozen. Why depart from every precedent set in this House? Silence was enjoined on members lest we frighten the timid doves in another place. We were acting as if another place managed everything and the Assembly was dumb. Why adopt a special course in this case?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Standing Orders provided for a situation such as that now presented to members, permitting the Government to take the course proposed. The Government were within their right in taking this action.

THE CHAIRMAN: The duty of the Assembly was to make the amendments or refuse to make them; but where there was no law, there could be no transgression, therefore he could not rule the motion out of order. He had given his advice; that was as far as he could go.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Were members to understand there was no Standing Order that permitted a conference between the two Houses at any stage?

THE CHAIRMAN: This was a peculiar position. Power was given to the Legislative Council to return a Bill at any stage for amendment. The Assembly could accept or refuse to accept the suggestions. In this case it was impossible for the Council to insist on their amendments; they had exhausted their powers under Section 46 of the Constitution Act. In the absence of any rule, it was desirable to adopt the practice followed in the case of a disagreement.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then this procedure was not ruled out of order?

THE CHAIRMAN: That could not be done.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: As long as the Government were not out of order in the procedure adopted, the Government were justified in taking what

steps they thought best to bring about an understanding between the two Houses. It was suggested by some members that the Assembly were altogether a superior body to the Upper House in dealing with a Money Bill. In the opinion of most members here, that might be the case. But the Constitution recognised the right of the other House on questions such as this to express an opinion, and they had done so. The Assembly on the other hand had passed a Bill affirming a great principle.

MR. WALKER: We had not considered the amendments.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: This House had passed a Bill containing a principle which many valued highly, and we desired to see that principle become law. For reasons which some could guess, certain amendments had been made to the Bill by another place, and there were those in this Chamber who for some reason or another desired to insist on those amendments. He did not appeal to those who disliked the measure and regretted its introduction, for if he (the Minister) believed as those members did, he would take every possible opportunity to wreck the measure; but he appealed to all those who believed in the principle of the Bill.

MR. WALKER: And believed in the amendments.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was difficult to get everything we wished at one fell swoop. Generally in reforms a step was taken at a time, and the fact that we had approved of a tax on unimproved land values was a step in the right direction, and he suggested to those who believed in the principle that they should do nothing which might jeopardise the measure.

MR. JOHNSON: The Minister was not justified in saying any other action would jeopardise the measure.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The present moment was opportune for a conference. If we discussed the amendments here and it was subsequently determined to meet another place in conference, it would be well known the limit to which the managers from this House would go. It might suit the member for Gascoyne to know to what limit the Government were prepared to

go, but it would not suit the Government.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not charge a member with an attempt to wreck the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS apologised if he had said anything out of order. It was admitted the time would come when a conference might be desirable. If two private individuals disagreed on some matter, but on the main principle they were in agreement, it would be most unusual for these individuals to first of all publish the exact limits of compromise to which they were prepared to go. If they desired to arrive at a settlement, they would meet one another to bring about some result. Before stating the limits of the concessions which either side was prepared to make, they would meet together and discuss the question. That was pretty much the position in which we found ourselves to-day. The member for Kanowna said that definite issues were always stated. When the Bill left this House for another place it contained an expression of opinion which was agreeable to a majority of the members, and the amendments made by another place indicated the general opinion of the Council. In these circumstances what reason was there for consideration as far as the two Houses were concerned?

MR. WALKER: We had had no expression of opinion on the amendments.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amendments in principle had been discussed when the Bill was in Committee, and a decision was come to. If we wanted practical results, now was the time for a compromise. It would then be open for members to consider the results at which the conference arrived and to abide by them or to farther amend them. He appealed to members who desired to see the Bill become law to assist the Government in obtaining the conference. It could do no harm.

MR. GULL had supported the Land Tax Assessment Bill because he realised the country wanted revenue; but from the beginning he took up the position that as it was a revenue tax there should be no exemptions, and now that these amendments came from another place he contended that members of another place were equally with us in saying whether

the tax should be for revenue purposes or whether as some members suggested it was for bursting up large estates. If the House accepted the amendments we gave the Treasurer more revenue than was anticipated. He could not see why we should have a conference now. It was a weak move.

MR. BOLTON: It was absurd to suggest a conference at this stage, because the Government would nominate five members from this Chamber, three from one side who would be quite as obstinate in their opinion as the two appointed from the Opposition side. The managers from another place would necessarily be nominated by the Leader of the House, who was a member of the Ministry. This was the proper place to find out the feeling of the Committee towards the amendments. The Premier had said there was one amendment to which he could not agree, inferring that he was prepared to agree to all the other amendments providing the managers from another place agreed to withdraw the amendments relating to the five years' exemption on conditional purchases. That was not fair. The Committee should be first afforded an opportunity of discussing the amendments and the Government should withdraw the motion. He believed the majority of the Council's amendments would be accepted by the Committee, and if the Council insisted on those which we did not agree to, then would be the time to hold a conference. Personally he refused to be bound by the findings of the managers. It was noticeable that the second portion of the Government's land tax proposals was postponed time after time in another place. The Government should take the risk of the Bill being defeated; and if it were defeated, the Government alone would be to blame for having refused to accept the Council's amendments, for if the amendments were accepted the Legislative Council would immediately consider and pass the other taxation measure.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member was apparently in the confidence of members of another place.

MR. BOLTON: The Government preferred to take the magnanimous course of saying to the managers from another place that they would accept all the

amendments suggested with one exception, and that exception happened to be the five years' exemption. The Premier had said so. If later there was necessity, a conference might be held.

MR. WALKER protested against the innovation contained in the motion, in assuming there was disagreement between the Houses before the fact had been established. He could understand the Government being anxious in regard to the Bill; but if the precedent were established of agreeing to a dangerous innovation of this character, it might be utilised on some other occasion to evade discussion of amendments from another place.

At 6:30, the **CHAIRMAN** left the Chair.
At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. BATH: In spite of the statement of the Chairman as to the unusual nature of the course proposed by the Treasurer, the Minister for Works argued that, there being nothing against this course, it was the right thing for the Committee to adopt the advice of the Treasurer and accept the proposal for a conference. It was true there was no specific provision in the Standing Orders which said that the Assembly should not, at this particular stage, ask for a conference, but the very specific nature of the Standing Orders dealing with the course to which we were accustomed made it absolutely certain that those who drew up the Standing Orders never contemplated the possibility of such a course, as was suggested by the Treasurer, being taken. In the first place we had it stated in the Constitution, in the sections dealing with the financial provisions and the application of the consolidated revenue, that all Bills for appropriating the revenue, or imposing, altering, or repealing any rate, tax, duty, or impost should originate in the Assembly. Then in Section 46 it stated that in the case of a proposed Bill which, according to law, must have originated in the Assembly, the Council could at any stage return it to the Legislative Assembly with a message requesting the omission or amendment of any items or provisions therein, and that the Legislative Assembly could, if it thought fit, make such omissions or amendments, or any of them, with or without modifica-

tions. Turning to the Standing Orders, Standing Order 312 provided if any amendments made by the Council in Bills which had first passed the Assembly were agreed to by the Assembly without amendment, a message was sent informing the Council thereof; if the Council's amendments were agreed to with amendments, the Bill was returned to the Council with a schedule of such farther amendments in a message desiring the concurrence of the Council therein, and if the Council's amendments were not agreed to the Bill could be laid aside, or it could be again sent to the Council with a message desiring its reconsideration. Standing Order 314 dealt with the procedure when any amendments were made by the Assembly on the Council's amendments. A schedule of such farther amendments was prepared for the Council's consideration. Standing Order 315 dealt with the position that arose if the Council returned the Bill with any of the Assembly's amendments on the Council's original amendments disagreeing to them, or insisting on its original amendments, or agreeing to the Assembly's amendments with farther amendments. In any case the message must be printed and a day fixed for taking it into consideration in Committee, and then the Bill must be finally passed or set aside, according as the Assembly agreed or disagreed to the requirements of the Council, unless the Assembly determined to request a conference. These terms could not be misunderstood. They set down the procedure which should be adopted. When the Bill finally came back from the Council there were three alternatives—the Assembly could agree to the Council's amendments and the Bill was passed; the Assembly could disagree to the Council's amendments and the Bill was laid aside, or the Assembly could ask for a conference and appoint managers. Those who drafted the Standing Orders had not in contemplation any Government moving for a conference at a premature stage, and so they made no Standing Order to provide for it. The whole of the Standing Orders absolutely demonstrated the irregularity of the course proposed by the Treasurer. It was said that if members were not pleased to accept the Bills of the Ministry as brought down *in toto* without amendment or suggestions, they desired to wreck the measures.

So far as he (Mr. Bath) was concerned he was more anxious to see this Bill passed than Ministers were. He was strongly of opinion that if the proposals suggested by the Opposition were adopted, the Bill would pass in much better form, in a form which would involve less expenditure and trouble and which would raise more revenue. What proposal in the shape of wrecking was there in the view expressed by members of the Opposition that some of the Council's amendments were desirable and improved the measure and made it more acceptable as an exemplification of what they regarded as a just principle? Nothing would expedite the passing of the measure more than the acceptance of these amendments. It seemed that in the absence of logical argument the Minister for Works was prone to accusing members of attempting to wreck the Bill. The solution suggested by the Opposition was easy and simple, and would be of great advantage to the Ministry. [Mr. HUDSON: And it was constitutional.] If the Government were hard up and were getting behind in the finances, they should accept the proposal submitted by the Opposition to adopt amendments which would enable them to raise perhaps £30,000 more revenue and to decrease the cost of collection. If a proposal of that kind could be considered as wrecking the Bill, he could not compliment the Minister for Works on his knowledge of the English language.

MR. DAGLISH: The action of the Ministry greatly disappointed him. They were setting out entirely without knowledge to break down every principle of British Parliamentary Government, and the only replies to an accusation in that direction made against them were the reply of the Minister for Works that if we did not do as the Ministry said, we were anxious to wreck the Bill, and the reply of the Premier that we must get the Bill through as it went from this Chamber without variation. It was entirely wrong for Ministers, particularly those who professed to believe in the bi-cameral system of representation, to absolutely refuse to afford the Committee a chance of considering the amendments suggested by another place. It was wrong to ask the Committee to submit the consideration of the amendments to five members. So long as we had a Parliament constituted of two

Houses, the views of either House were entitled to consideration at the hands of the other. The other Chamber having introduced new matter, and that Chamber desiring to have its suggestions considered by this Assembly, the object of the Council would be defeated if this motion of the Government were agreed to. No precedent, British, Canadian, or Australian, could be quoted by the Government in support of their attitude; and he challenged the Attorney General to quote a single precedent to justify this departure from established parliamentary custom. Assuming that the motion were carried, the effect would be that the amendments would not be considered, and yet every one of the amendments might be acceptable to this House. The five managers from this House would go to the conference without knowing what might be the opinions of this House arrived at in Committee. The Treasurer had pointed out that the holding of the conference would not detract from the right of this Committee to discuss any suggestions from another place; but in the event of a majority of those at the conference arriving at an agreement to accept certain of the amendments and to reject others, this Committee might be forced into the position of either breaking from an agreement so arrived at, or of accepting the views of a majority of our five managers. He would favour a conference, were he satisfied that there was any serious discrepancy between the Houses, and that every other means of arriving at a settlement had been tried and failed. Thus far we had made no effort beyond sending a measure in a certain form to another place, and we had not considered the views of another place in any way. If it were found we could not possibly agree to the Council's amendments, or if another place would not agree to withdraw them, then we might appoint managers to discuss the matter. He (Mr. Daglish) declined to entrust to five members of the House, no matter how chosen, his right to consider these amendments. If he did, he would be false to his electors, and would grossly insult the Council by declining to consider their suggestions. The Government were taking a wrong and dangerous course, and were making a scourge which before long would be used on their own

backs. Such tyros should not presume that they possessed more knowledge than the greatest constitutionalists of the British Empire.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The last speaker's remarks were full of advice to the Government, and of self-laudation; yet the hon. member would be the first to rebuke others who based their claims to attention on mere length of parliamentary experience. He (the Attorney General) was asked to quote any precedent for the course now suggested by the Government. If a procedure accorded with common sense he would not waste time by hunting up a musty precedent. We were entitled to inquire whether this was a wise and proper course, without asking ourselves whether it had been taken by somebody else. After debating this Bill at considerable length, the House sent it to the Council, who, not having finally dealt with it, returned it with suggestions made in Committee. The fate of the measure remained entirely in the hands of the Council. Assuming that we insisted on having the Bill as it left this House, another place could immediately negative the third reading and thus dispose of the Bill. Could the Government ask members here to go back on their determination with regard to some of the amendments? Many members supported the original Bill conditionally on the inclusion of certain provisions to prevent its interference with land settlement.

MR. TAYLOR: That was a second thought, after the Bill was introduced.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Long before the Bill was introduced he had ascertained members' views in order to secure their support; and the Bill could not have passed here without provisions protecting the interest of land settlers, which in the opinion of some members was the paramount interest in the country. Many members supported the Bill because it contained certain safeguards.

MR. HUDSON: Was the Attorney General in order in discussing the amendments?

THE CHAIRMAN: He was in order.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Apart from this motion, what other course could the Treasurer pursue than to ask members here to stand by the Bill as it left this Chamber? But if we did that

and refused to agree to the Council's suggestions, would not the Bill be seriously jeopardised? Every House which had a Bill in its possession could at any stage ask for a conference with the other House.

MR. TAYLOR: That dictum was contrary to the Standing Orders.

MR. BATH: Standing Orders 312 to 315, inclusive, laid down the procedure.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: According to No. 315, if the Council returned a Bill with any of the Assembly's amendments on the Council's amendments disagreed to, or insisted on the Council's amendments, or agreed to the Assembly's amendments with farther amendments, a day should be fixed for considering the message in Committee; and the Bill should be finally passed or laid aside, unless the Assembly desired to request a conference. In other words, when a Bill reached that stage, it must be either laid aside or a conference asked for; but that did not prevent our asking for a conference at any other stage. Members allowed themselves to be bound by mere words.

MR. WALKER: The Standing Orders mentioned laid down the order of procedure.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The meaning of that order was that after a certain amount of going backwards and forwards, we must either lay the Bill aside or adopt, what could be adopted at any prior stage, a conference. We could no longer make amendments. Amendments came from another place, to be considered here; we could agree to, dissent from, or amend them; we then could send our reasons to another place to be considered; and assuming that another place stuck to its original position and rejected our proposals, or accepted one and disagreed to others, then we could no longer make farther amendments, and must fall back on a conference. It did not say that because we could make no farther amendments we could not adopt a conference at any stage. If members turned to that portion of the Standing Orders dealing with communication between the two Houses, they would see it was made perfectly clear that at any time in regard to a Bill then in the possession of this Chamber (or *vice versa*), if either House in possession of a Bill took a view in regard to that measure which was

antagonistic to the views of another place, it could ask for a conference.

MR. BATH: Standing Orders 238 and 251 did not give any details of the circumstances under which conferences could be arranged.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was no Standing Order which said that at any stage or at only one stage was a conference to be the regular procedure.

MR. BATH: Yes; Standing Order 315.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It said no such thing. There could be no possible suggestion that because when that stage was reached we must fall back on a certain method of arranging differences, that therefore we could not at any stage of the Bill adopt a conference. The procedure on this Bill was not a usual one, and if members said that, he was prepared to admit it, because he was not in a position to contradict them. He was not going to be bound by precedent. If it was wise and prudent that we should take this course, he was prepared to take it, without caring one iota whether it was supported by precedent or not. The member for Guildford said it was not a wise and prudent thing to do, having regard to the fate of the measure. He joined issue with the hon. member on that point. He thought it was a wise course. If we committed ourselves to stand by the Bill as it left this House, we at once provoked a conflict with another place, which was almost certain to end in the rejection of the Bill. If on the other hand some of the amendments were accepted and some were not accepted, then we had advanced to this stage: we had shown a desire to arrive at a pacific solution of the difficulty. That must weigh in the minds of those with whom the difficulty rested as to whether the measure should pass or not. It was clear, by doing what was suggested by members, that we would be doing something to endanger the measure. He asked members who were desirous of having the Bill passed to look at the matter in that light, and avoid a conflict.

MR. BATH: There was no conflict of opinion yet.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Here was a measure passed by this House. It had been debated in a careful manner; not passed hastily but after careful and long debate. After it had received the

seal of this House in a certain form, it was sent to another place, and another place made amendments. Was that not a conflict of opinion? There was one feature evident in the discussion, that all those who wished not too well by the measure would insist on the rights of this House; and on the other hand some of those who did wish well by the measure would take the view mistakenly. Some would not take it mistakenly because they knew that by the conflict they would sound the death-knell of the measure.

MR. WALKER: Was the hon. member in order in imputing motives to members to defeat the Bill, and not honestly?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member used the expression in a general sense.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: What he had said was that some members were sincere in support of the measure, and nevertheless would object to the motion made by the Treasurer; and on the other hand some members were not friendly to the measure, and would be found voting with the member for Mount Margaret; and thus members in close alliance with him would be taking the view that member now took. He asked the House to assist the Government to secure for the Bill its enactment as a statute. We were desirous of achieving that result, and it was in order to achieve it that the Government suggested the course which had been put forward to-night. Members should seriously consider the position before taking any action which would jeopardise a measure of this importance.

MR. HUDSON: The procedure in this case was clearly defined in Standing Orders 213, 214, 215, which made it a condition precedent to the holding of a conference that all other means of arriving at a settlement had been exhausted. In the ordinary course we would consider the amendments which came from another place. Now the Attorney General said this need not be done. Why was it done in other cases?

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. WALKER, on a point of order: The entire discussion was out of order. May's *Parliamentary Practice*, page 412, provided that it was not proper for either House to anticipate the proceedings of the other.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question before the Committee had reference to Section 46 of our Constitution Act; and as no provision was made for such procedure [returning a Bill with suggestions at any stage] in the British House of Commons, the ruling quoted by the hon. member did not apply here.

MR. HUDSON (resuming): The trend of precedents set out in May was that there must be reasons shown; and we would not be following a constitutional course in agreeing to the proposition put forward by the Government.

MR. TAYLOR: The procedure suggested by the Treasurer was a wrong one. The Standing Orders amply provided for a conference, and Standing Order 315 defined the time at which a conference took place, namely after the Bill was finally returned from the Council with amendments insisted on. At present there was no quarrel. It was only when there was a quarrel that it was necessary to have a conference.

THE CHAIRMAN: This question was based entirely on Section 46 of the Constitution Act, which gave permission to the Council to return the Bill at any stage. Therefore the rules which fixed a stage for a conference did not apply to a question arising under Section 46. The principle of time in the Standing Order mentioned by the hon. member could not apply to a Bill which could be returned at any stage.

DISCUSSION.

MR. TAYLOR: The strong point made by the Attorney General was that no matter whether it was justified or not by precedent, we should have a conference at this stage. The Attorney General argued that a conference was justified to save the measure, even if there were no precedent. According to the Chairman's ruling no precedent was needed, but there was no chance of jeopardising the Bill by allowing the Committee to perform its functions and discuss the suggestions made by the Council. The majority of the Committee favoured the suggestions made by another place; consequently all that was necessary was to deal with the suggestions and not to allow the Committee to be stifled by the motion. He resented the charges made by Ministers that the Opposition desired to wreck the

measure. It was the desire of the Opposition to place the Bill on the statute-book.

THE PREMIER: No one said otherwise.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes: the Minister for Works said so, and the Attorney General practically said so. The Attorney General said that it was expedient to hold a conference to save the measure, but that some members would oppose a conference for certain reasons, for saying which the hon. gentleman was called to order. If the Committee were allowed to deal with the suggestions made by the Council those suggestions would be accepted.

THE PREMIER: After the conference, members would need to deal with the report of the managers. It would be for the Committee then to say whether they would accept the report or not.

MR. TAYLOR: Among the managers named by the Premier there were three Government supporters, and two of them, the member for Katanning and the Treasurer, had no sympathy with land taxation. He objected to delegating his duties to those members at a conference, when he was able and competent to deal with this question in Committee of the House.

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. WALKER, on a point of order: The whole meaning of Section 46 of the Constitution Act was that the Assembly should take into consideration the suggestions sent up by the Council at any stage. The Assembly must consider the suggestions made by the Council in order that it could omit, amend, or submit any modifications. When the amendments came from the Council it was the duty of the Committee to take them into consideration. That was clearly the intent of the Act. Otherwise how could we possibly amend, alter, or modify without giving consideration? The motion moved by the Premier was clearly to deprive the Committee of that opportunity at this stage, and it would prevent Section 46 of the Constitution Act being carried out by them in spirit and letter.

THE CHAIRMAN: The proposal of the Government was to consider the question at a conference, and if the Committee chose to move in that direction he could not rule against it. The whole matter was in the hands of the Com-

mittee. There was nothing in the Standing Orders against the motion. He would point out that this might be the last stage of the Bill, for all members knew, and consequently it might be the very stage members were arguing for. All he ruled was that the precedents of the British House of Commons did not apply to this particular case, because of Section 46 of our Constitution Act.

DISCUSSION.

MR. TAYLOR: The amendments would be accepted by a majority here, he believed; and was it likely that another place would go back on its own resolutions? Where then was the danger of wrecking the Bill by considering the amendments in this Committee? Inasmuch as the voting at the proposed conference of 10 managers would probably be 8 for exemptions and 2 against, what chance had he of seeing his opinions embodied in the report of the conference? He would have no objection to a conference at a later stage, after this Committee had dealt with the amendments. The amendments from another place would give the Treasurer an opportunity of increasing his anticipated revenue from £60,000 to £90,000 or perhaps £100,000; and in view of that fact alone the Government should withdraw the motion. The contention of the Attorney General that the success of the principle of land taxation depended on the passing of the motion was not correct. The Government were aware that on this question they could not depend for support on the Ministerial cross-benches. He had been twitted by the Attorney General that he would be found in strange company in the division on this measure; but he was prepared to sit in any company which would carry land taxation without exemptions. The Treasurer had admitted that, after probing the feeling of the House on the question of land taxation, he came to the conclusion that the only possibility of carrying such a measure was by including exemptions.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Those most in accord with the Bill were doing most to jeopardise its passage into law, perhaps unintentionally. The course suggested by the Government was more likely to result in the Bill being returned again to this House with recommendations which

would induce this House to accept the amendments.

MR. BATH: If the amendments were agreed to, the Bill would be carried.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Members who had spoken against the motion travelled largely outside the question. It was a reflection on members nominated as managers to suggest they had made up their minds before going to the conference. He had not been consulted as to being one of the managers, and would personally prefer to see someone else appointed who was not so strongly opposed to some of the provisions of the Bill; but if appointed, he would endeavour to do his duty in what he considered to be the best interests of the country. However, if the motion passed he would act as a manager, though he would not be displeased were another name substituted for his. Members knew his opinion of the Bill. He would like to give it fair play. If it did not pass this session, it would recur in every future session until it did pass. But in the interest of land settlement he had done his best to obtain modifications in the clauses affecting the settler, hence his amendment exempting the conditional purchase holder. The Council suggested that the exemptions be expunged, and it was said that if this Committee accepted the Council's suggestions the Bill would pass without exemptions. If that were so, he would do his utmost to prevent its passing; therefore he supported the motion, which, though possibly without precedent, should be adopted in the circumstances.

MR. DAGLISH: Standing Order No. 244 provided that—

If upon such motion any one member shall so require, the managers for the Legislative Assembly shall be selected in the same manner as the members of a select committee.

He demanded that if the original motion passed, the managers representing this Chamber should be selected by ballot.

THE PREMIER: The only reason for the motion in its present form was that the conference on the Redistribution of Seats Bill was appointed on a similar motion. The Government were quite prepared to take a ballot, their wish being to have all sides of the House represented.

MR. H. BROWN opposed the motion. The entire omission of metropolitan members from the proposed list of managers was an insult to the metropolis.

THE TREASURER: It was not so intended.

MR. H. BROWN: Two goldfields members and three representing agricultural constituencies were proposed. One of them, the Premier, said to-night he would accept no compromise on the question of conditional purchase leases, and another, the member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piesse), proposed the extension of exemption on those leases to five years. Such managers could come to no understanding at all with the Council. How would the Bill be jeopardised if we accepted the Council's amendments? The Upper House was absolutely presenting to a penurious Government several thousand pounds by deleting the exemptions passed in this House; yet the Government refused the proffered revenue. Surely the metropolitan area should have some representation in the conference. The memorable open letter of the Treasurer and the speech of the Minister for Agriculture showed that the managers representing agricultural constituencies represented the very people who were not to be taxed. He (Mr. Brown) deprecated whipping up Government supporters in the House. This should be done in the lobbies. One would think the fate of the Government depended on this motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: As objection was taken to the latter part of the motion, the managers must be selected by a ballot. That portion of the motion relating to the constitution of the conference was out of order, and would not be put. No amendment was needed.

MR. TROY wished to make his position clear. He was opposed to the intentions of the Government in conferring the duty of members on five representatives. Since he had been a member of Parliament no such procedure had been adopted. The amendments suggested by the Council commended themselves to him, especially those referring to exemptions. When considering the measure in Committee he urged that there should be no exemptions. A majority of members were in accord with those sentiments. This was an opportune

time for the House to accept the Council's amendments. He would vote against the motion because he wished to see the amendments thoroughly threshed out in this Chamber. If a conference were appointed, the representatives selected from the Opposition would be out-voted by the representatives elected from the Government side and the managers for the Council.

Mr. A. J. WILSON was desirous of seeing the Bill carried, and as the issues raised by the amendments were brought before the Committee when the Bill was before this Chamber previously, and were defeated by a substantial majority, the probability was, if the matter was again discussed in Committee, the same position would obtain. The third reading of the measure had not yet been passed in another place, and if this Committee refused to accept the suggested amendments, in all probability the third reading would not be carried by the Council, and the Bill would be shelved. There was room for honest doubt as to that aspect of the case. Having regard to the expressed opinion of the majority of members it would be far better for representatives of this Chamber to confer with representatives of another place and try and arrive at a satisfactory compromise to ensure the passage of the measure. We were not justified in running any risk of losing such an important Bill.

Question (as altered) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	23
Noes	18

Majority for	5
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AYES.

Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Davies
Mr. Eddy
Mr. Ewing
Mr. Foulkes
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Hayward
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Layman
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Price
Mr. Smith
Mr. Stone
Mr. Veryard
Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Bath
Mr. Bolton
Mr. Brown
Mr. Butcher
Mr. Collier
Mr. Daglish
Mr. Hicks
Mr. Holman
Mr. Horan
Mr. Hudson
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Troy
Mr. Underwood
Mr. Walker
Mr. Ware
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).

Mr. BATH: Before members proceeded to ballot he would like to make his position clear. Members knew the opinions he had expressed in regard to this matter, and was it fair that, if elected, he should be one of the managers for the Assembly?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was not in order in discussing this matter. A ballot would have to be taken for the appointment of managers.

Ballot taken, and the following appointed as managers:—Mr. Bath, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Piesse, Mr. Scaddan, and the mover (Mr. F. Wilson).

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

Resolution reported.

THE TREASURER moved—

That the report be adopted.

POINT OF ORDER.

Mr. DAGLISH: The motion was submitted entirely without notice. The notice of motion tabled was "Land Tax Assessment Bill, consideration in Committee of Legislative Council's message." Some members had desired to discuss the message, but were prohibited from doing so by the Chairman, who ruled that the subject under discussion was not a message which embodied a certain number of amendments on the Land Tax Assessment Bill, but that the question was the motion of the Treasurer for a conference. Of the present motion no notice had been given. Members had attended under the impression that they would be called on to discuss the Council's suggested amendments in the Land Tax Assessment Bill. No doubt members had made themselves familiar with those amendments, and were prepared to discuss them; but no member had any inkling that a new proposal in parliamentary procedure was to be submitted to the House to-day. Each member was taken by surprise. Points of order were raised when the House first reached the Committee stage, and the Chairman was forced to admit, in regard to the procedure adopted on this occasion, that in the absence of any definite Standing Order there could be no transgression in regard to procedure, but that the action of the Government in submitting this motion was entirely irregular. Had time been allowed to the Chairman

Question thus passed.

to look up his authorities, perhaps the ruling would have been different. But the Chairman was in the same position as other members of the House. Apart altogether from the practice of Parliament in regard to giving notice of motion, except when the Standing Orders were suspended or when special leave was granted by the House, the Standing Order respecting conferences between the two Houses was very specific. It provided that every notice of motion requesting a conference must contain the names suggested by the mover to be managers for the House. That distinctly implied that there must be notice, otherwise the words of the Standing Order would be irrelevant. The Premier was aware of the existence of that Standing Order, and recognised its binding effect on the Government, inasmuch as he provided the names of members proposed as managers, and when a point of order in regard to the question of taking a ballot was raised, the Premier quoted this Standing Order as having compelled him to insert the names in the motion. If Standing Order 233 was binding on the Premier in regard to the insertion of the names, it was equally binding on the Premier and the Government in regard to giving notice. If the practice of giving notice be insisted on in regard to matters of comparatively small importance from a constitutional standpoint and of small importance to members of the House, if it be insisted on in matters of detail, surely in regard to a matter of such vital importance as the resolution reported, a departure from all established parliamentary procedure, members should have not only that notice which was given for matters of detail, but every opportunity of acquainting themselves with the terms of the motion, and of looking up the authorities. Apart altogether from the point of order in regard to the necessity for giving notice, he likewise desired to raise a point of order in regard to the procedure adopted by the Government on this occasion. He submitted that the motion reported as having been passed in Committee of the whole House was entirely foreign to parliamentary practice and contrary to the British parliamentary practice and to the proceedings of any Australian State Parliament or the Federal Parliament.

The Chairman had ruled that this motion, although not a definite transgression against the Standing Orders, was irregular, but could not be ruled out of order because there was no specific Standing Order which dealt with it. He (Mr. Daglish) respectfully submitted that the motion was out of order because it was a transgression against the practice of the House of Commons. Our Standing Orders specifically provided that where there was nothing in them governing a definite case, the practice of the House of Commons should be followed; and since the motion submitted by the Government, resolved in Committee and reported, was contrary to the practice of the House of Commons, it contravened the Standing Order which provided that we should follow the practice of the House of Commons, and became on those grounds out of order. The Attorney General had admitted in so many words that no precedent for this motion could be quoted by the Government. The Attorney General was challenged to quote one, and admitted that in this instance he was unable to furnish one. That alone showed that the practice now proposed to be adopted was one that contravened the parliamentary procedure adopted in the House of Commons. He (Mr. Daglish) asked the Speaker's ruling on the points, first that no notice had been given of this motion, and secondly that as the motion now reported by the Committee was contrary to the practice of the House of Commons, it therefore contravened our Standing Orders, which distinctly provided that where no distinct rule had been adopted by the House the practice of the House of Commons should govern our proceedings.

THE TREASURER: The hon. member was distinctly out of order in challenging the ruling of the Chairman of Committees after the Chairman had left the Chair. The Chairman had given a ruling, and with all due respect, the proper time to disagree with that ruling was when the Chairman gave it and not after the Committee had reported.

MR. BATH: This was a new point of order.

THE TREASURER: It was the same point of order. He had looked up the procedure followed on a previous occasion, and found that when Mr. James

was Premier and the question of a conference on the Constitution Bills was raised, Mr. James adopted the exact procedure followed to-night.

MR. BATH: No.

THE TREASURER: *Hansard* would show on page 3166 of the Debates in 1904 that Mr. James introduced the question while the Speaker was in the Chair, and moved that the Speaker do leave the Chair and the House resolve into Committee.

MR. DAGLISH: There was a dispute between the two Houses.

THE TREASURER: Mr. James explained that he intended to submit a motion for a conference when the House got into Committee, and he wound up by using the words which he (the Treasurer) used, "that the Speaker do now leave the Chair for the purpose of going into Committee to consider the Legislative Council's message and the motion of which I now give notice." There was nothing in the Standing Orders demanding that a formal notice should be given. The notice was given practically when the motion was submitted that the Speaker do leave the Chair and the House resolve into Committee. During the remarks which he (the Treasurer) made he adopted the same procedure and read out the notice which he intended to move in Committee. The matter was perfectly in order. The Committee having adopted the resolution and reported to the House, the motion now before the Chair was for the adoption of that report, and it was in order for members to divide on that question.

MR. BATH: The Premier was not correct in saying that he had adopted the same procedure as Mr. James did. The procedure adopted by Mr. James in 1903 was in accordance with Standing Order 315, because the Bill had passed in the Assembly, had been sent to the Council where certain amendments were made in the Bill, it was returned to the Assembly, and the Assembly disagreed to the amendments and returned a message to the Council.

THE PREMIER: That was not the point.

MR. BATH: The Assembly returned a message to the Council stating that the Assembly disagreed to the Council's amendments, and the Council then

insisted on its amendments. The point arose in regard to Standing Order 315, whether the Assembly had either to agree to the amendments and pass the Bill, or disagree and set aside the Bill, or appoint managers to a conference. In accordance with Standing Order 315, managers were appointed, and they met in conference. That procedure had not been adopted in this case, therefore there had been an infringement of Standing Order 315, which expressly laid down the procedure to be adopted.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Two points had been raised: one was practically that the House should disagree to the ruling of the Chairman of Committees. That was a question of procedure. The point not having been raised when the Chairman was in the Chair, it could not be entertained at this stage. That entirely set aside the consideration of that point. The next point was that no notice of motion had been given. The Treasurer had quoted the instance in 1903 when the Premier, Mr. James, followed exactly the same procedure as the Treasurer adopted to-night. That was the correct procedure.

MR. FOULKES wished to amplify what the Treasurer had said as to the point of order in respect to disagreeing with the Chairman's decision. The Chairman gave his decision. There was a provision in the Standing Orders that if any exception was to be taken to the ruling of the Chairman it must be taken at once. A member who objected to the ruling of the Chairman had to put his objection in writing and an appeal was then made at once to the Speaker, who had to give his decision. With regard to the point that this discussion had taken place without proper notice being given, it was to be regretted that no such notice was given. He submitted for the Speaker's ruling that the time for taking exception to notice not having been given was immediately the Treasurer made his proposal.

MR. SCADDAN: A point of order could be raised at any time.

MR. FOULKES: It must be raised at the proper time and not after the proceedings had closed.

MR. BOLTON: They had not closed yet by a long way.

MR. FOULKES: It was too late to raise a point of order as to whether a motion was in order, after the House had come to a decision. It was laid down in the Standing Orders that if any exception was to be taken to the proceedings in the House it must be taken at the time and in due form.

MR. WALKER: This was a new point of order. The member for Claremont misunderstood the member for Subiaco. The member was not disputing the points raised in Committee and decided in Committee, for this was an entirely new point and partially raised when the Speaker was previously in the Chair. When the Speaker was in the Chair he (Mr. Walker) asked if the motion was for the purpose of considering in Committee the Council's amendments. It was agreed that that was the question, therefore we were acting in pursuance of the business paper. The point had occurred since, and it might be taken at any time, that this question was out of order inasmuch as the House having gone into Committee for a certain purpose we should have had some notice of it. The Standing Orders said notices of motion must be given, and so much was that insisted on that they actually provided the details of the motion and insisted on certain things being done in that motion, evidently with a view of giving members either in Committee or full House an opportunity to judge of the persons who were to be sent from this House to the other as managers. The names must be included. The hon. member could not state that it was a notice when he told us he was going to do something in Committee and afforded an idea of what he was going to do. The object of a notice of motion was to give every member an opportunity of being present when a matter of such importance was to be considered. There having been no notice in this case, it followed that the motion had been out of order all through, the point not having been raised in Committee. That was no reflection on the Chairman. Now was the opportunity to take the point.

MR. HORAN: The proceedings during the last two or three hours were quite out of order, and could not receive the confirmation of the House for the reason

that in the latter portion of Standing Order 315 it was distinctly stated—

And the Bill shall then be finally passed, or laid aside, according as the Assembly may agree or disagree to the requirements of the Legislative Council, unless the Assembly determines to request a conference.

The proper time to raise the point was now, and it could not have been raised more appropriately at an earlier period.

THE PREMIER: Standing Order 315 dealt with the matter when a Bill came back a second time.

RULING.

MR. SPEAKER: It would shorten the discussion if he decided on the second point that had been raised, that being that a request for a conference could not at the present stage be made. That had been already decided, and the Chairman's ruling was not questioned. With that ruling he thoroughly concurred. Action should have been taken when the Chairman gave the ruling. The member for Kanowna had raised the point, and he (Mr. Speaker) decided then that the only question before the House was that he should leave the Chair and that the House should go into Committee for the purpose of considering a certain message. That was the only course open to him. The Chairman ruled in Committee that the motion by the Treasurer was in order, namely that there was no Standing Order against it. The Chairman was correct in that ruling. As to the other point, regarding the mode of obtaining a conference when the Constitution Bill in 1903 was being dealt with, no notice had been given in that case. A motion for a conference appeared to be one that might be properly moved on the consideration of a message. It was virtually an amendment upon the motion that the amendments be disagreed to, and it might equally be urged that such motion required notice. Standing Order 207 provided:—

No member shall make any motion initiating a subject for discussion, but in pursuance of notice openly given at a previous sitting of the House, and duly entered on the Notice Paper.

This motion did not initiate a subject for discussion; therefore he contended that the hon. member was in order at this stage.

MR. TAYLOR: The conference in 1903 was not the same.

MR. SPEAKER was aware of that. The question had never been raised before in this form.

MR. TAYLOR: The Government had based the justice of their action on the attitude taken by the then Premier, Mr. James; but the two positions were not the same. We had exercised every means of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion before we appointed the conference in 1903. That was not so to-day.

Question (that the report be adopted) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	22
Noes	...	...	15

Majority for ... 7

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Brown	Mr. Bath
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Davies	Mr. Collier
Mr. Eddy	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Gordon	Mr. Holman
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Horn
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Hudson
Mr. Hicks	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Illingworth	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Layman	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Male	Mr. Walker
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Ware
Mr. N. J. Moore	Mr. Troy (Teller).
Mr. Piesse	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Stone	
Mr. A. J. Wilson	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Hardwick (Teller).	

Question thus passed, the report adopted.

THE TREASURER farther moved—

That a message accordingly be transmitted to the Council, requesting that a time and place for the conference be named by the Council.

MR. WALKER hoped the House would not lay itself open to insult. When the message reached another place, we should be snubbed. The Council had sent certain amendments for our consideration. If we returned a message asking them to appoint managers, surely the Council would not agree to deal with that until the opinion of the Assembly on the Council's suggested amendments was ascertained.

MR. TAYLOR: As yet there was no point in dispute between the two Houses, and probably the Council would refuse

to appoint managers to discuss Council's suggestions which the Assembly never had an opportunity of discussing. The managers of the Assembly did not know the opinions of the members they represented. The Council should demand that its suggestions be discussed here.

Motion put, and passed on the voices: a message accordingly transmitted to the Council.

[10-30 o'clock p.m.]

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1906-7.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from the 8th November, MR. ILLINGWORTH in the Chair.

MINES DEPARTMENT, continued — (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Vote—State Batteries, £91,365:

MR. BATH: The Minister had reserved his remarks on State batteries till we came to the vote.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Let us first hear members' criticisms on the proposed vote for batteries.

MR. HOLMAN regretted the Minister saw fit to go on with these Estimates; but it was another example of what we had had in the past, jamming down the throats of members Estimates that required careful consideration. Members had just received the printed report of the Batteries Inquiry Board. It would have been an act of courtesy on the part of the Minister to give members time to consider that report; but the Minister was afraid to allow members to peruse the report, because his conduct of the State battery system would be thrown open to the light of day. He (Mr. Holman) was not going to allow these Estimates to be put through without due consideration. The Minister should report progress, because it was a most important question, involving the expenditure of a quarter of a million of money. The money had not been spent to the best advantage; with half the money an equal amount of work could have been done; in fact money had been wasted; it certainly was not spent to the best advantage. Certain strong remarks he (Mr. Holman) had made against the Minister when speaking on the Address-in-Reply were fully borne out by the

Batteries Inquiry Board; in fact the board had gone farther than he would dare to go because he knew the Minister had a reputation, not because of his work, but bolstered up by the Press. That reputation, as was now shown, was not warranted. One did not see the wisdom nor the necessity of starting at 11 o'clock at night to force these Mines Estimates through. He would not be in order in saying that the time already spent during the sitting had been wasted, but we could have started these Estimates much earlier if the proper procedure had been adopted by the Government. Unless the Minister agreed to report progress, he (Mr. Holman) must take time to look fully into the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board and to find out exactly the gist of that report. He desired to give to the Minister every possible assistance. This question of State batteries should be above any party, and any criticism he would offer would be to bring about a better condition in the department and not to block the Minister. However, he strongly objected to the Minister bringing in Estimates at 11 o'clock at night when members were not in a proper frame of mind to discuss them. Before the Estimates were passed the Committee should be fully seized with the importance of the report just received. He would allow the Minister to make a statement on the matter.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: So far as he was concerned, it was his intention to proceed through these Estimates and not to stop unless some question was raised on which it would be necessary for him to obtain farther information.

MR. TAYLOR: What time did the Minister consider reasonable?

THE MINISTER: Members should have thought of that some time before. We had absolutely wasted hours to-night. His opinion—and it was held by many members—was strong on the extreme delay in dealing with the public business in this Chamber.

MR. HOLMAN: Brought about by Ministers' incompetence.

THE MINISTER: Quite probably; but there had been exceeding delay this evening, and members on the Government side did not desire to be sitting until

after the New Year. We were not making the progress that should be made. We should push on with public business so that we could end the session.

MR. SCADDAN: The Minister was doing the same as he did on the Mines Regulation Bill, bringing it on at midnight.

THE MINISTER: could not help remembering the extreme delay in connection with that Bill. For the past week an official copy of the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board had been laid before members opposite.

MR. SCADDAN: Some members.

MR. JOHNSON: had not seen one.

MR. SCADDAN: It was not intended for the hon. member.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE MINISTER: There were sufficient copies to enable members opposite to peruse the report and to deal with it. Farther than that, a month ago a type-written copy was laid before members, and to assist members he had also given the report made by the State Mining Engineer on the Batteries Inquiry Board's report, and also the report made by the Superintendent of State Batteries. For the purpose of having absolute fair play and enabling the head of the department to criticise the report, he (the Minister) instructed the head of the department to reply to the indictments made by the board. He had the document printed and circulated amongst members, so that they could read not only the report made by the Battery Board and the comments made on that report by the State Mining Engineer, but the reply of the head of the department?

MR. JOHNSON: Was not the Minister head of the department?

THE MINISTER: Members knew whom he meant, the Superintendent of State Batteries. That officer had been able to give his reply, which was printed and had been in the hands of members for four or five days, so that members should be able to come to some clear understanding as to the rights and wrongs of the various matters brought up by the board. In regard to the appointment of the board it had been stated that the report was somewhat of an indictment against himself. Having been in charge of that department for a long period, anything that was wrong in connection with that department would be a

charge against himself. [Mr. JOHNSON: Hear, hear.] He quite admitted that there were initial blunders made by the hon. member (Mr. Johnson) during the six weeks he was in charge of the Mines Department. Every time he (the Minister) spoke in the House as to these Estimates he had always stated that he was not satisfied with the work of the office. Although there had been improvements, he thought much more could be done for the prospectors and miners of the country with the money that had been placed in the hands of the Minister to assist the industry. Time after time had he made that statement. Improvements had been effected, but he was not satisfied with the system at present in vogue. When he looked at the heavy cost of the new plants erected and the high charges for treatment, he saw necessity for the appointment of this board. When standing for election last year he stated it was his intention, if re-elected, to appoint a board to inquire fully into the battery system. He could not place his knowledge before the technical knowledge in the department. It was not part of his duties to tell the Superintendent of Batteries what portion of the work was his, for that officer was the technical adviser of the department, and should be able to advise the Minister as to what should be done; and if the administration was imperfect, discredit would redound to the Minister and discredit would redound to the permanent head of the department.

MR. HOLMAN called attention to the state of the House (10.55 p.m.).

Bells rung and quorum formed.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (continuing): On the appointment of this board he asked for some advice as to how the battery system could be improved for the future. He proposed to give members a few figures in connection with the working of the department since its inception. In 1898-9 the battery system was started, and in the first year of the administration of that department there was a loss of £5,527; in 1900, there was a loss of £7,611; in 1901, there was a loss of £646; in 1902, the first year he had control, there was a profit of £1,954.

MR. HOLMAN: How much from cyanide?

THE MINISTER was not aware that the cyanide treatment was in vogue in 1902. In 1903, there was a profit of £2,539; in 1904, when there was a change of administration, there was a loss of £5,141; in 1905 the profit was £3,342. There was a profit of only £600 or £700 in the first half of that year. For the first nine months of 1906 there had been a profit of £1,224; so that during the number of years from 1898-9 to 1906 there had been a loss of £18,925, and there had been profits amounting to £9,059, so that although when he took office there were losses accruing amounting to over £13,000, the total loss to date amounted to £9,866. It should not be forgotten that in the initial stages of this battery system, the charges made for public crushing averaged from 15s. to 20s. a ton, and he reduced those charges very early after taking office, to a sliding scale of from 10s. to 14s. a ton, averaging about 12s. 3d. a ton. His object in dealing with the tonnages and sending weighbridges to the batteries was to make the battery system a record of our crushings. If a battery crushed $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons and the result was given to the public as being the crushing for one ton, it was a dishonest record which was sent all over the country. If that was done it was highly improper. If members took into consideration the Norseman battery, for instance, in the first year of the running of that battery there was a loss of £2,600, and in the second year £1,600. If we ran many batteries like that, it would pay the Government better to give the prospectors £1 a ton on the stone raised and ask them to leave it at the battery, rather than crush it for them. This showed the administration in the early days. There had been big changes and very few losses since 1902. Since that year, there had been a small profit shown on the working of the battery system. This Parliament had never asked for more than that. It had been the general impression of members, except of course the member for Guildford, that the vote for the erection of batteries was a subsidy to the mining industry. We were asked simply to make these batteries pay their working expenses, and if we

could do that the indirect advantage which it was hoped would accrue would compensate for the money expended in the erection of the plant. That was the policy which had actuated him ever since he had been in office and which he intended to continue as long as he remained in office, until Parliament instructed him to pay interest, and if necessary sinking fund, in connection with the plant. The indirect advantages from the erection of these batteries were very great. There were places which but for the advantages of the battery system would have been absolutely dead to-day. When he took control of the department there were no rules in force in connection with the working of the plant, and friction was arising in different parts of the State. Regulations were framed by him, and as far as he could judge they had been generally approved. In regard to the purchase of goods, he found that no system had been adopted in relation to countersigning all orders or the receipt of goods by the various managers. Ever since he had been in the department he had urged that we should have a standard plant in connection with our battery system. We had found many instances in which a boiler running a 10-head plant would be using a certain percentage of firewood, whereas another of equal capacity would be doing about twice or three times the work with the same class of plant. That was the result of things having been constructed by rule of thumb, and these matters had been attended to. Then there was the question of monthly returns. Each month when the returns were given to him he took care that they were handed to the newspapers. There was nothing which gave better worth to the State than giving these returns to the newspapers and inviting public criticism. The system was stopped almost immediately after he left office, and was not again started until he returned to the office. However, he understood that the department preferred that they should give their reports every three months instead of every month. In regard to the report which had been submitted, no doubt many of the statements were very drastic. In some cases reports spoke very strongly in regard to Ministerial interference in connection with the management of the battery system, more

especially in relation to a little matter as to the managers and assayers, on which the member for Guildford might give a little information.

MR. JOHNSON: And on the appointment of managers the member for Menzies might give information.

THE MINISTER: If the member for Guildford would give a little information with regard to that special interference on his part, where he thought a manager and assayer were not necessary at all on those batteries, it might satisfy members on the Opposition side of the House. He (the Minister) had read the report about Ministerial interference.

MR. JOHNSON: The remark was one which he had never made.

THE MINISTER did not desire to deal with that, except to say that the Minister was responsible to Parliament, and if he was not satisfied with the working of a department it naturally followed that he must interfere in regard to the administration of that department. If he was not prepared to take a strong stand in connection with the department, he was not fit for the position, and the sooner he left or allowed the department to run the Minister the better it would be probably. When the Minister took responsibility for the department, he must interfere occasionally with regard to administration.

MR. JOHNSON: The Minister did take the responsibility now?

THE MINISTER had never tried to get away from any responsibility in connection with his department.

MR. JOHNSON: Not in regard to the State Battery Department?

THE MINISTER: Not in relation to any department. It seemed peculiar that he could not speak on any mining subject without a continuous fire of childish interjections, though members in Opposition were seldom interrupted when speaking. All would agree; considering the large sums expended, the facilities given to the department, and the prices charged to the public, that we should get better results from the batteries. If satisfied with the working of the department he would not have appointed the board of inquiry; and as he anticipated, the report of the board pointed to incompetence. Sir John Forrest's object when

the battery system started was to erect small plants which could be transported from place to place to test the value of lodes and enable miners to judge whether their shows would justify them in erecting their own plants. We had long since passed that stage. We had a large number of batteries and stamps working, and the work was undoubtedly beyond the capacity of the gentleman in charge of the branch.

MR. JOHNSON: The Minister was so mean as to attack his own officer.

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. Daglish) had already asked members not to persist in interjecting. He would name any member who continued to offend.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES did not wish to injure the gentleman at the head of this department; but the work was beyond his capacity. We needed a head who could give better advice than we had received in the past. Each battery customer thought his stone worth more than its real value, and more than the battery could give. The batteries were extended over an enormous area, from 20-Mile Sandy Creek, Pilbarra, to Meekatharra, Revelstone, Duketon, and Norseman. A good administrator was needed to work successfully so large an organisation—a high-class mining engineer who was also a fair metallurgist and a man of sound business acumen. Of course it was easy to find fault, and fault would be found with anyone put in charge of the branch; but in the interest of the pioneers we were justified in looking for better results than had hitherto been obtained. He had no wish to do any irreparable injury to one who had worked for years in the department, and he would as far as possible take care that the gentleman in question was not seriously injured. But the Minister had to consider what Parliament asked for when voting these moneys. He must get the best results irrespective of persons. The Government did not seek for interest on capital, as the indirect advantages to the State should fully compensate for the money expended on the battery system. Up to date 383,000 tons of stone had been treated and 192,000 tons cyanided, gold being won to the value of £1,744,352. We had won 351 tons of black tin. We might roughly say that through the State

battery system we had won minerals to the value of nearly two millions sterling. No doubt that was a great result. Unlike other States we did not spend our money on boring or in assistance for development, but rather on our battery system, which if it could be perfected might result in crushing and cyaniding for from 16s. to 17s. 6d. per ton, and reducing the smelting charge from 5s. to 3s. per ton, recognising that this reduction probably meant to the miner the difference between success and failure. At the expense of any individual we must try to give every possible advantage to miners in the back blocks. These did not want any spoon-feeding, nor that plants should be worked at a loss; but they contended that a change could fairly be demanded when private plants were working more cheaply than State batteries, though the department had the full credit of the State behind it, enabling it to buy as cheaply if not more cheaply than private firms. Thus we were justified in assuming that though a State battery might not be able to crush for the price charged by private enterprise, the State charge should approximate to that price. The battery board stated they could not recommend any reduction in the cost of crushing, but considered a reduction might be made for cyaniding, though not till the system had been brought somewhat near perfection. It was not quite certain whether we could not make reductions, with proper improvements. A list of the various plants working during the past year showed that the principal losses in crushing were incurred at Yundamindera. The total crushing losses, including head office and inspection fees, were £6,486. The head office fees amounted to £1,320 and the inspection fees to £389. Out of the £6,486 there was due to the head office for inspection fees a sum of £1,700. There was a loss at the Yundamindera battery of £897 for the year. This loss must be stopped. He did not mind a small loss, but something must be done to prevent continual losses. There was a loss on the Yerilla battery of £576 due to the Government having purchased an old plant on which a good deal of renovation was necessary. The Duketon battery had proved a failure, also Laverton, where very little stone had lately been brought to the battery, but with these

exceptions, as a rule there were small profits shown, totalling in all £2,760. A few batteries showed losses on cyaniding, namely Darlôt £250 and Randalls £208. The total profits in connection with cyaniding amounted to £7,926, as against a loss of £1,861. In the battery treatment we showed a net loss of £3,725 on crushing and in tin plants of £2,750, while on cyaniding there was a profit of £6,065, there being altogether a total profit of £4,187 for last year, from which had to be deducted additions and improvements made to various plants £2,404. So the actual profit for the year ending June 1906 was £1,774. That was all Parliament desired. On the other hand he had a strong desire to try to reduce the costs. Our present crushing charges were 10s. to 14s. on a sliding scale, or an average of 12s., and the cyaniding charges were 10s. a ton, which meant altogether 22s. a ton. We should be able to make a reduction by improving the plants and improving the administration and by reducing working expenses. That was the system he intended to follow. He did not propose to go further to-night into the question except to say that it was his intention, if the step was approved by Parliament, to appoint another head to control the State Batteries branch.

MR. HORAN : With separate control apart from the Minister ?

THE MINISTER : No ; the Minister must take the absolute responsibility ; the Minister must be responsible to Parliament.

MR. JOHNSON : Why did the Minister try to place the blame on the Superintendent of State Batteries ?

THE MINISTER : While not pretending to be able to give technical advice, he had enough common sense to be able to judge of the work of one man against another. In the early days it was easy to get a battery manager to control the few batteries in existence, but when we had an enormous system working to its present extent we required a specialist. He intended to try to obtain the services of a specialist who would be a mining manager with a thorough knowledge of metallurgy, and who would be possessed of business acumen. It was not to be a political appointment. He was surprised at the questions recently asked by the

member for Dundas (Mr. Hudson) in regard to this matter. Probably the hon. member had no desire to be offensive, yet he (the Minister) thought there was something offensive in the manner of asking the questions. He desired to get the best man he possibly could to run this huge system. It was his desire to assist the prospectors as they should be assisted. Parliament had always liberally voted money in connection with the State Batteries branch. No doubt the department had been greatly improved from what it was four years ago. Big reductions in charges had been made, and the system was paying expenses ; but if we were to carry out improvements and make farther reductions and still pay working expenses, the administration must be better than it was now. He was prepared to deal with any criticisms which might be offered in connection with the department. He would be pleased to answer any questions asked, but he did not desire to get away from any responsibility. At the same time it was only right, when he proposed to make changes, that he should explain what he intended to do, so as to enable members to say whether the changes should be made or not.

[MR. ILLINGWORTH resumed the Chair.]

MR. BATH : While there was no objection to the Committee sitting beyond the termination of the debate upon the previous matter, the Minister had no justification for saying that he was going to pass through the whole of his Estimates at this sitting. He (Mr. Bath) repudiated any imputation that Opposition members were guilty of wasting time, and repudiated any responsibility for the eccentricities and vagaries of Ministers in regard to a message from another place on the Land Tax Assessment Bill. Had a constitutional and proper course been taken, the discussion on that message would soon have been finished. The Minister was well aware that he (Mr. Bath) had given notice of a motion dealing with the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board. Had members been in possession of that report and been able to proceed intelligently with that motion, the debate upon the motion would have undoubtedly occupied a whole sitting. The Minister himself would have acqui-

esced in that, knowing the important bearing it had, not only on the mining industry, but on the welfare of the State and the position of the finances. We had had to reserve our criticism on this matter till the discussion of the Mines Estimates, owing to the length of time since the board had sat. There was no justification whatever in trying to prevent criticism of the Estimates when dealing with such an important matter at this hour of the night. He had complained of the time which had elapsed since the board sent in their report, and the presentation of that report to members. It was unfair to members who attended the prospectors' conference not to have had copies of that report. It seemed that the attitude of the Minister for Mines right through had been an attempt to evade his own responsibility in regard to this question, and to burk criticism. The attitude of the Minister to-night at the outset in sitting quiescent, almost allowing the vote to pass without any reference to future policy, seemed to confirm the statement he made, that the Minister wanted to evade criticism and his responsibility for the errors which were so caustically exposed in the report submitted to members. During the recess, in the course of a political address to his constituents he (Mr. Bath) made use of the term that the administration of the State battery system by the Minister was rotten.

THE MINISTER: The member said the administration of the Mines Department.

MR. BATH: The bulk of the criticism was directed to the administration of the State batteries and the granting of aid to prospectors. While it might have been a vulgar way to express his opinion, it was certainly truthful, and it was backed up and confirmed to the utmost degree by the report of the board of inquiry. The Minister had said that because he (Mr. Bath) did not mention it on the Address-in-Reply, he was willing to say in the Brown Hill constituency what he was not prepared to say to the Minister's face. But the reason he did not do so was because he was having a controversy with the Minister, and he refrained from any criticism at that time, knowing that other members who were representative of the electorates in which a greater number of

prospectors lived would deal with the matter fully. Attached to the report submitted to members we had the comments which the Minister had asked the Superintendent of Public Batteries to submit, and in the very first paragraph of that reply of the superintendent we had the kernel of the reason for the maladministration of the battery department summed up in a few sentences. The superintendent could have dispensed entirely with all other comments in the various recommendations and paragraphs, and could have stopped his reply at the end of the first paragraph. Then he would have entirely justified himself so far as the administration of the batteries was concerned, and would have fastened the blame on the person entitled to bear it, the present Minister. The superintendent said in his reply :—

Perhaps in my personal interest I may be permitted to state that, on being selected for the position I was unacquainted with Government procedure, and many of my first-formed ideas had perforce to fade from my mind. I was called upon to set a scheme going which, in spite of present-day developments, had not matured, and I fully expected to be able to supervise the running of public mills equally as satisfactorily as privately-owned mills are run, but I omitted to recognise that in managing State mills I was not master of the situation. Public opinion had to be studied, and the commercial aspect at once disappeared. I have since found that in endeavouring to follow a course acceptable to the Minister of the day, and remain sympathetic to the body of prospectors who practically control the system by the attention paid to their demands, the title of Superintendent of State Batteries has become a misnomer.

In these sentences the whole situation was summed up, the whole responsibility for the maladministration of the State batteries department was fastened on the shoulders of the Minister for Mines; and when the member for Mount Margaret, speaking the other evening, said that perhaps blame might be attachable to one individual and another, he (Mr. Bath) then said that in his criticism he was prepared to attach the blame to the Minister.

MR. SCADDAN called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and quorum formed.

MR. BATH: In the printed comments by the State Mining Engineer, we had in paragraph 10 a statement in regard to

"outside pressure on Superintendent of State Batteries," and in paragraph 11 reference to "interference with Superintendent of State Batteries, Ministerial control." Right throughout the report the board resented the interference exercised by the Minister for Mines in regard to the administration of the department by the Superintendent of State Batteries, and they practically exonerated that officer from any blame for the present condition of the State Batteries Department, because he had not been given a free hand owing to the fact that Ministerial control or interference had hampered his efforts in such a way that it had been an impossibility for him to administer the department in the way it should be administered. It was not advisable that the control of the State Battery Department any more than that of any other department of State should be taken away from the Minister and vested entirely in the hands of the permanent head. The recommendation submitted by the board that the head of the department should be made practically independent had been brought on our shoulders because the Minister for Mines had not utilised his Ministerial power properly. Whatever blame might be attachable to the Minister for his wrong administration, we should not be led by it into supporting any proposal which would place entire control in the hands of the permanent head.

THE MINISTER: The board said the superintendent was responsible only to the Minister, and not the permanent head.

MR. BATH: The Battery Department had been used as an adjunct in connection with the election campaign. Had the Minister been able to rise above his own little considerations or his security in his own particular electorate we should not have heard of any of these charges and not have had this scathing criticism on the State Battery Department; but the Minister had not been able to rise superior to those considerations. In the Minister's electorate there were no less than six batteries showing losses. There were losses at Mount Ida, Mulwarrie, Pinguin, Siberia, Yarrrie, and Yerilla. The Minister had referred to the profit and loss in regard to the State batteries, but forgot to say that in the year in which

such a big profit was shown the State batteries were enabled to treat the sands of the prospectors and pay the proceeds into the Treasury.

THE MINISTER: The year 1904 showed a loss of £5,000.

MR. BATH: Because then the prospectors demanded to have some share of the proceeds derived from the treatment of the sands. A summary of the return regarding State batteries, given on page 108 of the Report of the Department of Mines, showed that the profit claimed in 1905 in relation to cyanide plants was £6,279 14s. 3d.; the loss on the working batteries was £2,613 4s. 6d., and on the tin plant £324 3s. 3d. The total loss on the batteries and tin plant for the year being £2,937, and the subtraction of that from the profit on the cyanide plants of £6,279, left a profit for that year of £3,342. In regard to the profits earned by State batteries we must turn to the report of the board of inquiry, where it was pointed out that the total loss on the State Batteries Department was £12,000. According to the report of the Mines Department for 1905, in that year £129,999 was expended from loan on State treatment plants and £87,082 from revenue, a total of £217,000; and so far the operations showed a loss of £11,000, no account being taken of interest on capital and depreciation of plant. Possibly we should not expect a profit on batteries erected out of revenue; but what could we think of the Government who stated their only desire was to spend money on reproductive works paying interest at least, when we found that on State batteries $1\frac{1}{2}$ times as much was spent out of revenue as out of loan. If this policy continued, unless greater care was shown in administration the loss would be perpetuated, and must be borne together with interest on loan moneys by the revenue. Surely this was unnecessary. Near Kalgoorlie was a battery let out to people with stone to crush, the total cost of treatment being only 5s. per ton; and we might be sure the owners did not let the plant for weeks at a time without a profit. With proper administration free from personal influence, the same could be done with our State batteries; but no such result could be expected from the present Minister, who used the batteries as an

election advertising medium, as a means of elevating himself in the eyes of some few in his own electorate, at the expense of the prospectors throughout the State. Prospectors in the electorates of Oppositionists received no consideration whatever. Their requests for water and other facilities had been denied for years and still remained unsatisfied, while batteries were spread all over the Minister's own electorate.

THE MINISTER: Who built them?

MR. BATH: The Minister for Mines.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member should stick to facts. Let him mention some which he (the Minister) had authorised, save the battery at Menzies.

MR. BATH: The battery board recommended that capital already expended should be regarded as State aid to the mining industry. To that course one would not object if we could differentiate between those who had undeservedly secured such assistance and those who merited it. Making this differentiation, he would not be averse to continue the policy of asking Parliament each year to place a sum on the Estimates to compensate for the loss incurred by the operation of State batteries. But in present circumstances we could not hope to make that differentiation. If under the present administration the State batteries were run at a loss, it was not fair that the people of this State should be asked to bear that loss in order to feed the proprietors of rich shows such as the Fenian at Meekatharra, an immensely profitable concern, or the fairly rich shows at Burtville which returned considerable dividends. Why for the sake of them run State batteries at a loss? There was need for clearer differentiation between mine-owners and leaseholders of that kind, and those who were developing their shows with small profit to themselves, and who therefore needed some State assistance. This branch of the department should be placed above all party and Ministerial considerations, and with good business administration the batteries could pay expenses and interest on loan capital, while making a reduction in their charges. To assist struggling prospectors he would vote a substantial sum; but that assistance should not be distributed according to the sweet will of the Minister. The vote should be cut out

between the various districts, with some regard to their needs; and in each district we should call in the advice of local boards, representative of prospectors. Then the Batteries Branch would be a business concern, and the vote fairly allocated throughout the goldfields. The whole of the battery board report was a condemnation of the Minister. Throughout the pages of history none was held up to greater execration than the man who, having his blunders exposed, tried to throw the responsibility on the shoulders of someone unable to defend himself.

ALL-NIGHT SITTING.

[12 o'clock, midnight.]

MR. BATH (continuing): There was nothing more contemptible than the attempts on the part of the Minister to dodge responsibility for the administration of the State Batteries Branch, and to shelve it on the Superintendent of State Batteries. It was to be expected that in building up this department errors would be committed for which, perhaps, the superintendent should be held responsible; but when it came to placing the blame for the general maladministration of this system it could not be placed on that officer's shoulders. If the Minister dismissed the superintendent and placed someone else in the position, the Minister was making a scapegoat of the superintendent for his own sins. One could understand the Minister's anxiety to dodge responsibility for the State Batteries Branch, because the one thread on which the reputation of the Minister hung was the administration of the State batteries. The Minister's friends said the Minister was not much good for anything else, that he had made mistakes in every department, but that he had done a good job in the State Batteries Branch; and now this report of the Batteries Inquiry Board cut that thread and the reputation of the Minister as an administrator fell to the ground. His incapacity in even this department would be seen throughout the State if the people were made conversant with the scathing criticisms contained in the report.

MR. JOHNSON: The sole responsibility for the administration of the

State batteries rested on the shoulders of the present Minister. It was true that he (Mr. Johnson) for ten minutes, as the Minister said, had administered this branch of the Mines Department, and that Mr. Hastie administered it for about 12 months; but apart from these terms, the whole of the administration of the State batteries had been in the hands of the present Minister.

THE MINISTER: No; there were three years before his period of office.

MR. JOHNSON: When the Minister was speaking on the goldfields, especially at Menzies, the hon. gentleman claimed to be solely responsible for the State batteries system, and went to the extent of saying that though Sir John Forrest had proposed certain things, he (the Minister) was the one who thoroughly introduced and established the system.

THE MINISTER: That statement should be withdrawn. It was without foundation. He would not be so foolish as to go into a constituency like Menzies and make such a statement. The State batteries system was advocated in the year before he came to Parliament by Sir John Forrest, and it was working for three years before he assumed control of the department. The statement should be withdrawn.

MR. JOHNSON withdrew; but the hon. gentleman had undoubtedly claimed to have established the State battery system and put it on a firm basis, and to have made it an up-to-date system. The Minister said now he was dissatisfied with the administration of the batteries, and repeatedly when introducing the Estimates and speaking in the House had complained that the administration of the department was not altogether satisfactory; but the Minister forgot that he was solely responsible for any maladministration. If the Minister was dissatisfied why did he not alter things? Other Ministers shouldered responsibility for any complaints in regard to the administration of their departments, and the Minister for Mines in connection with any other branch of his department took responsibility for its administration. It was strange that in the State batteries system the Minister shuffled out of the responsibility and tried in a miserable way to put it on the Superintendent of State Batteries, who could not de-

fend himself in the House. Not only did the Minister do this in the House, but on the goldfields he created dissatisfaction against the management of the system. If the Superintendent of State Batteries had failed it was only because of the political interference of the Minister. The Minister had brought down the defence the officer had made in connection with the charges levelled against his branch by the Batteries Inquiry Board; but members were not given an opportunity of reading it in order that they might protect the superintendent against the accusations and insinuations of incompetency made by the Minister to-night. He resented strongly the remarks of the Minister. We had to look at the reason for this board being appointed. It was true that during the election campaign the Minister stated he intended to appoint a board, and it was said the board was appointed to whitewash the Minister and place the responsibility for the maladministration of the departments on the superintendent. We found by the utterances of the Minister to-night that these opinions were only too true. The board did not bring in the finding the Minister thought they would, but they found that owing to political interference the superintendent was hampered in the administration of his department. The Minister had said he had always tried to make the batteries pay, and that he did not want to follow the policy initiated by the member for Guildford and make them pay interest and sinking fund. The member for Guildford never wanted to make the State batteries pay interest and sinking fund, and when the Minister told the people on the goldfields that, he was stating an untruth.

THE MINISTER: The hon. member should withdraw that statement.

MR. JOHNSON: The Minister made an incorrect statement, and knew when he made it that it was incorrect.

THE MINISTER: The member would not make the statements outside which he was making here.

MR. JOHNSON was perfectly prepared to make the statement that the Minister's remarks were incorrect.

THE CHAIRMAN: The member was not in order in saying that the Minister had made an incorrect statement.

MR. JOHNSON withdrew the remark. If the Minister wished him to make the statement outside, he would do so quick and lively.

MR. JOHNSON (continuing): The Minister for Mines had stated to-night that while he (Mr. Johnson) was Minister for Mines he tried to make the batteries pay interest and sinking fund. When he went into the Mines Department he did so at the request of his chief, to try and cut down the cost of administration of that department, and to pay first attention to the State batteries. He devoted his first attention to that matter, and in order to get hold of some basis to work upon he asked for some particulars as to the moneys expended on the State battery system, the revenue earned, and the profit or loss made from the inception to the present date. The officers pointed out that no balance-sheet had ever been prepared, and that it would take a considerable time to get out a thorough balance-sheet. He (Mr. Johnson) instructed the officers to get out a balance-sheet similar to a statement which would be drawn up by any business firm or private firm if operating these batteries. He told the officers to get out a balance-sheet allowing for capital expenditure out of revenue, the interest on loan, and the sinking fund, and allowing the usual depreciation on machinery. That was brought out in order to have a basis to work from. He was not in the department long enough to carry out his policy. He had not time to do anything farther than get hold of the starting point, but the Minister had inferred that the work was brought to a finish. The Minister went through the goldfields stating that because he (Mr. Johnson) got out a balance-sheet it was his intention to make the batteries pay interest and sinking fund. That was totally incorrect. He (Mr. Johnson) was charged by the Minister that he intended to increase the cost of crushing to prospectors, to make the battery system pay interest and sinking fund. The Minister was unfair to him when he made that accusation. Every goldfields member when seeking re-election had to combat this argument which was put forward by the Minister. The imputation was cast on him throughout the goldfields, and at every meeting that he

addressed he had to refute that argument.

THE MINISTER: Would the member quote?

MR. JOHNSON: Other members would do so. If the hon. member wished him to do it he would get the papers and quote them at some length.

THE MINISTER would be quite prepared for the hon. member.

MR. JOHNSON: The balance-sheet was referred to by him to show the misrepresentation we had from the Minister in connection with his recent campaign and the campaign of others, during the last general election. The Minister misrepresented the Labour party and himself (Mr. Johnson) when he stated on the goldfields that it was the intention of the Labour party and of him (Mr. Johnson) to make State batteries pay interest and sinking fund. The Minister expected him to-night to justify his action in stating that assayers should be abolished and the position of manager and assayer combined. He had never said that. He believed that Mr. Hastie, the then Minister for Mines, had written something to that effect, but he (Mr. Johnson) was not responsible in any way for that question. He had never written a minute on it, and was in no way responsible. The Minister admitted he was dissatisfied with the administration of the department. He would not take the responsibility of the administration of that particular branch, and tried to put the responsibility on the superintendent. He (Mr. Johnson) had been going to set himself to reorganise the department and place it on something like business lines, and endeavour to give general satisfaction to the prospector and to the State. He had a conference with all the officers connected with the State battery system. He had the assistance of Mr. Powell, a very competent officer, whose appointment was severely criticised by the present Minister. Since the present Minister took over the administration Mr. Powell had left the department, but he had been able to get an appointment in Victoria worth £750 per annum. After that conference he (Mr. Johnson) got the officers to report on different phases of

the administration or the working of the State battery system. He also obtained a report from the State Mining Engineer, and together they went into the whole question of the dissatisfaction existing in connection with the working of the State batteries. So exhaustively had they gone into the question that they found from the report of the board of inquiry that the board had only waded through those files and had only discovered what was already on record in the Mines Department. It had cost the country £1,200 for the board of inquiry to go through files and come to the same conclusions as had been arrived at by the officers of the Mines Department. After getting the advice of those expert officers he gave instructions for a circular to be sent to every prospectors and leaseholders' association where they had a battery, in order that they could criticise the proposals, and that by the criticisms he could arrive at a conclusion as to the best means of reorganising that subdepartment. Although on the 17th August 1905 he issued instructions for that circular to be sent out, the circular had not been sent out when he left the department on the 26th August. During the contest at the time of the present Minister's re-election it was urged against him (Mr. Johnson) by the Minister that he had not sent out that circular. At a meeting at Kookynie, an interjection reached him to the effect that the Minister had not stopped that circular from going out, and that the circular was never issued. He remarked, "If Mr. Gregory were here himself, he would admit that circular had been stopped from being issued to the leaseholders and prospectors' association." He was then told that the interjector was Mr. Gregory himself. He then turned round and said if he could not prove the Minister had stopped that circular from going out he would not only resign his seat in Parliament, but would retire for ever from public life. That was a direct challenge to the Minister; and to show his *bona fides* he went to the department and asked the Minister to produce the file showing whether the circular had been stopped; but the Minister absolutely declined to produce

it, making some excuse. Only recently was the file placed on the table, and it showed the circular was issued on the 17th August. Owing to some delay explained on the file, the circular had not been issued when the Minister assumed control, and one of his first acts was to give instructions that the circular should not go out; yet he stated at a public meeting during an election campaign, and to secure his return, that he did not stop the circular; and this statement was made only a few days after he had stopped it, when he could not have forgotten the minute which he wrote with that object. The Labour Government, wishing to reorganise the State battery system, had made a start with a proposal to the Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association, introducing a new system which would not have cost the State £1,200 like the Batteries Inquiry Board, whose report was, as the Minister admitted, of no use except that it would lead to the dismissal of the present Superintendent of Batteries and the appointment of another man.

THE MINISTER had never used the word dismissal, and the hon. member had no right to use it.

MR. JOHNSON: Someone else was to be appointed. One was pleased to hear the superintendent was not to be dismissed. Would there be two superintendents? The present superintendent would be a distinct loss to the department. Both the Minister and the Labour Government recognised the need for reorganisation; but the Minister spent £1,200 in an unsuccessful attempt to secure this, whereas the Labour Government would have done it themselves. The Minister, the Attorney General, and several others who stood in opposition to the Labour party accused the latter of increasing State battery charges. A mistake was made by the departmental officers in the interpretation of his (Mr. Johnson's) instructions, when Minister for Mines, to increase certain battery charges; and prior to making this attack on him the present Minister, as shown by his minute, recognised that a mistake had been made. On the 2nd June 1905, a report was received from the manager of the 20-Mile Sandy Creek battery that he had

put through a very rich crushing for the Castlemaine of three tons, returning 828ozs., leaving in the sands 1.45 tons; yet the manager stated the Government had made an absolute loss on the crushing. After reading the report he (Mr. Johnson) wrote on a covering minute attached to it, on the 1st July 1905, to the Under Secretary for Mines: "I think these rich crushings should be subject to a special impost." That minute went from the Under Secretary to the superintendent of State Batteries, who drew up a proposal for increasing the charges in respect of such crushings. The Under Secretary sent on the minute to him (Mr. Johnson), suggesting an alteration in the recommendation of the Superintendent. He (Mr. Johnson) concurred in the suggestion of the Under Secretary, clearly understanding that he was dealing with the 20-Mile Sandy Creek battery, to which the whole correspondence referred, his minute being attached to the report of the manager of that battery. His approval of the increased charge referred to this battery only. However, the file contained a note in some unknown handwriting that when the minute was dealt with it should be put in the sliding scale file—an altogether different jacket. Why that was done he (Mr. Johnson) did not know. The superintendent took the instructions to mean that the increase was to apply to all batteries. The minute having been removed from the one battery file and placed on the general sliding scale battery charges file, the superintendent took it as a direction that it should be sent out to every battery throughout the State. It was sent out just previous to the resignation of the Labour Government, and the present Minister went throughout the goldfields saying that the increased charges were approved of by the Labour Government. That was incorrect. He (Mr. Johnson) could not say anything stronger.

THE MINISTER: Why not quote his (the Minister's) statements?

MR. JOHNSON: The file was full of newspaper reports. He did not desire to stonewall or weary the House. It would take too much time to read those newspaper reports and it was absolutely

unnecessary. The Minister in numerous ways accused the Labour Government of increasing the battery charges generally, and when that statement was denied the Minister produced a telegram that came into the office on the 23rd August. The resignations of the Labour Ministers must have been in on the 22nd August, and on the 23rd August he (Mr. Johnson) was not Minister for Mines, but was merely carrying on awaiting the appointment of his successor.

THE MINISTER: Why did not the hon. member leave the matter to be dealt with by his successor?

MR. JOHNSON: A telegram came from the Prospectors' and Leaseholders' Association as follows:—

At a meeting of the executive committee of combined Prospectors and Leaseholders' Association, held at Leonora on the 20th instant, it was resolved to enter an emphatic protest against the recent increased crushing charges. Would you kindly withhold your sanction to increase pending communications from us?

He (Mr. Johnson) replied that he could not reconsider his decision. When he started with the matter he had dealt with the 20-Mile Sandy battery. The whole of the discussion was in connection with that battery, but by some means or other it was transferred to the general sliding scale file, and the superintendent sent out a circular to every State battery increasing the charges. Having no idea that the circular had gone out, when he received the telegram he imagined that the association were dealing with the 20-Mile Sandy battery, and that a communication had been received by the association from 20-Mile Sandy protesting against the increased charge. He did not give much consideration to the matter because he would not reconsider his decision in connection with the rich crushings at that battery, and he wrote simply stating that he could not reconsider. The present Minister for Mines on the 28th August wrote—

To my mind this appears to have been brought forward through the special instance quoted at the 20-Mile Sandy battery.

One could only arrive at the inference that the Minister realised the extra charge was not intended to apply to all batteries. However, the Minister afterwards went

throughout the goldfields and tried to injure the candidature of every member of the Opposition by stating that the Labour Government intended to increase the battery charges throughout Western Australia. That statement was incorrect because it was only through a technical error in the Mines Department that the charges were made general instead of applying to one battery only.

MR. BATH: That was characteristic of the Minister's tactics.

MR. JOHNSON: The Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association must see that an injustice was done to the Labour party by the statements made by the Minister, and members must realise how difficult it was to be continually combating these statements. He was anxious to contradict the Minister, but when he went to the Minister's office to get the files the Minister would not produce them. To sum up the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board, it was a reflection on the Minister. True, the board went into the question of treating slimes and sands, the standardising of batteries and keeping plans at the head office; but all these things had been recommended by the Superintendent of State Batteries for years past. The superintendent wanted standardised plants during his term of office, but it could not be done unless funds were provided. It was the same with plans. In any method the board recommended it would be found it was already dealt with in the department, and the Minister, if he desired these recommendations, could have got them from the officers of the department. The final conclusion arrived at by the board was that the Superintendent of State Batteries could have obtained better results if he had not been subjected to interference by the Minister and Secretary for Mines, and that the superintendent was too pliable and too anxious to accord with the interference. But how could the superintendent refuse to comply with the recommendations of the Minister? The unfortunate part of it was that the superintendent was too willing to take verbal instructions instead of getting them on the files. If we had a little more on the files of the Mines Department we would have

a little more blame to lay at the door of the present Minister. Instructions were given verbally, and when anything turned out a success on these verbal instructions the Minister took the credit, but if it turned out otherwise the superintendent was at fault. After he had been in the department a week or two he stated that what we wanted was a board controlled by the Minister, the Minister to outline the general policy and the expert officers to carry out the details. We could do that in connection with our other trading concerns; why could we not do it in connection with our State batteries? The Minister had too many batteries in his own electorate. It would have paid the Minister better to deal with the general policy and leave details alone. If the Minister had laid down the general policy and allowed the officers of the department to carry out the details, we would not have had the accusations against the Superintendent of Batteries. That officer was absolutely competent for his position, and if there was any fault in his administration it was attributable to the Minister. If the Minister dismissed that officer he would be guilty of covering up his own misdeeds by so doing.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member had a peculiar record. One had expected some strong attacks, more especially from this member, because inside and outside the House the member had been making statements as to what he intended to do in regard to the battery department. At the general election, the member rushed through his (the Minister's) constituency and fought hard in favour of the opposing candidate, and when the member for Guildford made up his mind to "go strong," there was little limit to what he would say. He (the Minister) happened to have a report of the meeting held in Kalgoorlie where the member talked of the rowdy crew, the unscrupulous crew, and the dishonest crew. Hon. members should be made aware of statements this member made when he got outside. The Leader of the Opposition had said that on the majority of the batteries there was a loss, that these batteries were in the Minister's electorate.

while the batteries in other districts were profitable. It was stated that special facilities were given in the Minister's constituency which were not given in others. But the fact was, these facilities were given while he (the Minister) was not in office. When speaking on the public platform, he told the people of Mulline and Menzies that he was not prepared to give rebates in one instance which he was not prepared to give in others, and he declaimed against such principle. The member for Guildford, then Minister for Mines and controlling the railways as well for six weeks had all but re-organised this department when an ungrateful Parliament turned him out of office. The hon. member stated later that a board was appointed with the object of whitewashing the Minister (Mr. Gregory). Probably the member might have had an idea of that sort, but he (the Minister) simply tried to get two honourable men to advise him as to what was the best to be done for the future. He wanted to find out what was best in the interests of the battery system of Western Australia. In regard to the balance-sheet the member said so much about, the member forgot that he published this balance-sheet in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* a fortnight or three weeks after he left office. The hon. member said that when he got into the Mines Department he could find no official records. He (Mr. Gregory) had been looking anxiously for the member's minute to Cabinet in connection with the Fremantle railway station, but could not find it. He was not in the habit of giving verbal instructions, and when he placed instructions on the file he was anxious to keep them there. In connection with the increased battery charges, the member's memory was at fault, for he could not remember what had occurred. He (the Minister) had stated that in the event of a customer being dissatisfied with the charges at a battery, he could appeal to the Minister.

[1 a.m., Wednesday.]

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (continuing): That was what he did, and it was what gave the hon. member the cue that the increased charge was only

to apply to Nullagine. In paragraph after paragraph we read impassioned speeches by the hon. member and caustic criticisms upon him (the Minister). If members had gone down to that constituency and listened to the abuse by the hon. member they would have been able to form some good idea of the class of criticism he (the Minister) was subjected to in dealing with these battery charges. The hon. member went to his (the Minister's) constituents and told them that in regard to these increased crushing charges it was merely a blunder on his part, and that had he remained in office a few days longer he would have cancelled them. What were the facts? An incident occurred in relation to a small parcel of stone. The manager sent a report and asked that he should be allowed to make a higher charge, and instructions were given that stone worth two ounces to the ton should be charged 17s. 6d. per ton for treatment, and that the charge should be raised to £1 per ton for stone giving five ounces to the ton. On the 22nd August a special meeting of the prospectors' association was held at Leonora, and they sent a telegram to the Minister asking about these increased charges. A special meeting was held at Menzies, and they sent word to the Minister, who was in office three days longer, and the hon. member was asked not to allow those increased charges to take effect. He told them it was simply a mistake, and that had he remained two days longer in office he would have cancelled them. Then he (Mr. Gregory) produced a published telegram sent to the then Minister (Mr. Johnson) by the prospectors' organisation, and there was his refusal to reconsider his decision. Then the hon. member turned round and said, "I never intended it to apply to the people of Nullagine." The hon. member had never said that there should be a special charge on the people at Nullagine.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Why was it there now?

THE MINISTER: The charges had been brought down by him nearly 40 per cent. as compared with those imposed by the hon. member (Mr. Johnson).

He did not wish the insinuations made by the hon. member to go on record without making some comment in regard to this reorganisation scheme which the hon. member had outlined so extensively. The *Kalgoorlie Miner*, published on the 12th September, reported that he (Mr. Gregory) said that the ex-Minister for Mines had had the impudence to say he had suppressed the circular ordered to be sent to the leaseholders' association, but that assertion was absolutely untrue. The circular was framed on the 4th August, finally revised on the 18th August, and had not been circulated when Mr. Johnson left office eight days later. The facts were that the hon. member was preparing some sort of reorganisation scheme. When he (Mr. Gregory) saw it he perceived the stupidity of it, just as clearly as did the State Mining Engineer, as shown in that officer's report. If the hon. member had had any desire to send that circular out he would have done so. If there was any suppression it was due entirely to the hon. member himself.

MR. BATH: The hon. gentleman (the Minister for Mines) spent £1,200 to expose his own incompetency.

THE MINISTER: If anyone only spent two minutes in examining the facts he would see how incorrect the hon. member was in his statement with regard to the losses in his (the Minister's) own district.

MR. BATH had only quoted from the Minister's own report.

THE MINISTER: Then the hon. member misquoted, because the hon. member stated that there were only two batteries showing a profit there.

MR. BATH had not made any such statement.

THE MINISTER: What did the hon. member say?

MR. BATH: What he quoted was information regarding the batteries in the hon. member's electorate which showed a loss. He said there were six of them—a majority.

THE MINISTER: That statement was equally incorrect. Only two batteries in his district showed a loss. The 20-Mile Sandy Creek battery had made a con-

siderable reduction in charges since the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) left office.

MR. UNDERWOOD: The 20-Mile Sandy Creek battery was still charging considerably more for crushing than any other battery in the State. The owners of the Castlemaine claim were prepared to pay any reasonable charge; and their crushing mentioned to-night consisted of three tons of stone, 90 per cent. of extraction by cyanide, 43ozs. to the ton. This battery charged 4s. to 5s. a ton more than any other battery. That the battery had not been kept working full time was not altogether the fault of the district. A windmill erected in lieu of a steam pump had proved a failure; and he and many others with stone to crush had wasted weeks waiting for wind. This was one of the most difficult districts for the miner, and deserved special consideration. Carting the stone was the chief difficulty, fodder costing as much as 36s. a bale. Only in a good season when feed was plentiful could stone be carted to the battery. Irrespective of personal differences between present and past Ministers, the 20-Mile Sandy Creek battery should be fairly treated, and the prices reduced to the normal level.

THE MINISTER had reduced them by nearly 10s. a ton.

MR. HOLMAN: The Minister took credit for reducing charges at the 20-Mile battery; but some 10 or 12 months after the Minister took office he still compelled people in that district to pay 22s. a ton and over for crushing; or that was the average cost for the first three months of this year.

THE MINISTER had made the reduction about April of this year.

MR. HOLMAN believed the cost of treatment was almost as high at Yundamindera.

THE MINISTER: A profit was made at 20-Mile Sandy Creek.

MR. HOLMAN: Why any differentiation? The people in the North-West should have the same advantage as people elsewhere. Put all the batteries on an equal basis. Last year the total loss at Yundamindera was nearly £800. The whole of the crushing cost the State

10s. per ton, that being practically a bonus given by the Government. Such assistance was not given in other parts of the State. The Minister said the whole of the batteries in his electorate, with one or two exceptions, paid; but according to page 107 of the report there were in 1905 losses at Mount Ida, Mulwarrie, Pinjin, Siberia, Yarri, Yerrilla—all in the Minister's electorate. There were losses in six batteries out of nine situated in the Menzies electorate during 1905. The information given by the Minister should be the same as that given in the public reports. On several occasions Ministers denied statements contained in reports laid on the table. In all probability it would be said that the Opposition had stonewalled to prevent these Estimates going through. If so, it would be unfair. The Minister took more time to-night speaking on these Estimates than all the other speakers. Due credit should be given to the Opposition by the Press when the Opposition took a stand in endeavouring to safeguard the expenditure of public money. The question of State batteries and giving assistance to prospectors was above party questions. All members should unite to push forward the leading industry of the State, and no better assistance could be given to that industry than careful administration and the proper working of the batteries system. When the Superintendent of State Batteries did good work the Minister did not fail to take the credit for it; but on every occasion when the Minister should have taken responsibility for the mistakes that had occurred through his own instructions, he had never failed to lay the blame on the superintendent. That was unfair, and it was a thing no honourable man would countenance. It was shown in the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board that the superintendent had received blame when the Minister should have shouldered the responsibility. The Minister said the system was paying, but the crushing plants were not paying, nor would they ever pay. The Minister failed to inform the Committee that the whole of the profits had been received from the working of the cyanide plants. The charges which were made in con-

nection with cyaniding at State batteries were too high. At present we had twenty cyanide plants at work, and all the profits each year on State batteries had been brought about since the introduction of cyanide plants in 1901. The working of the batteries system was not satisfactory. The Batteries Inquiry Board took long enough to furnish their report, but they did not visit the Murchison, and no report could be complete without the board visiting at any rate part of the Murchison. The plants on the Murchison worked under very different conditions from plants on Eastern Goldfields. The Minister should be impressed with the necessity of getting some more economical means of working our batteries. We might adopt oil engines or producer-gas plants. Some trial might be undertaken at an early date to see whether some more economical system of power could not be introduced. The State Mining Engineer recommended it.

THE MINISTER: Special reports were being obtained from London about the producer-gas plants.

MR. HOLMAN: At Wiluna, where the water was bad and fuel was scarce, producer-gas plants would save 3s. or 4s. a ton in crushing. In several other directions savings could be effected if that system were introduced, but the system had not been tried in Western Australia. There were scores of these plants in South Australia at the present time. When the Minister tested that system, no doubt he would do so with Collie coal. The manufacturers were willing to instal a plant in any part of Western Australia, and would not require that plant to be taken over until it had been thoroughly proved. All through the report of the Battery Board it was shown that the whole blame for the maladministration rested on the Minister. At Meekatharra at the present time a plant had been erected at the instigation of the Minister, but it was not being worked. That was owing to bad administration on the part of the Minister in not obtaining a proper supply of water. The reputation which the Minister had given to him by the Press was not borne out by the records of the department. Although it

might be said members obstructed other Estimates, there was no obstruction shown towards the Minister at any time in carrying out departmental work or in putting his Estimates through. Every possible assistance was given to the Minister to make the Mines Department and State Battery Department a success, but the Minister did not give members credit for any assistance rendered. If the same consideration were given to other districts as was given in the Menzies electorate, the conditions of mining here would be much better than obtained to-day. Although a promise had been made to erect a battery at Nannine, so far no definite move had been made to call for tenders.

THE MINISTER: Instructions to call for tenders instantly had been given to-day.

MR. HOLMAN: At Nannine there were a good many thousand ounces turned out, and there was extreme necessity for the erection of a battery. If one were erected the place would open up well. At present there were thousands of tons of ore ready to be crushed and no battery near the place. The stone had to be sent to Tuckanarra. The Minister had stated that it was his intention to appoint a new superintendent of batteries. He hoped the appointment would be a wise one, but the present superintendent had not been given an opportunity of showing what work he could accomplish. The present superintendent had in the past tried to do his work in a conscientious manner. The information now supplied showed beyond a doubt that the superintendent had been forced, owing to the Minister having control over him and to the directions given by the Minister, to give decisions to carry out work against his own will and regulations. It was impossible for an officer to do his work when required to do that time after time. He hoped an opportunity would be given to the superintendent to show that the work he had done in the past had not been his own work, and that opportunity had not been given him to make this system a better success than it had been in the past. It was a question whether a board would make any great success

in regard to new batteries. Reading the reports would lead one to suppose that the State Mining Engineer had an idea that he was the only one who could fill the position. The work done by the State Mining Engineer, however, did not warrant his receiving another appointment until he had proved himself a better man than he had done up to the present. One would prefer that the present superintendent should be given an opportunity to look into the system and reorganise it on a proper basis. He did not desire to stop here all night, and was not going to do so; but he asked the Minister and the Premier not to insist on the unwise policy of forcing the Estimates through at such a late hour.

MR. HUDSON desired to make a personal explanation, as he felt very keenly the attitude adopted by the Minister for Mines in regard to withholding information which the Committee were entitled to have. We had the recommendations but not the full printed report of the State Batteries Inquiry Board. He was sorry if anything he said on that occasion caused offence to the Minister, but he felt that he had a right to make those observations, and those observations were justified because we now had the report from the State Batteries Inquiry Board, and some farther information from the Minister. The report spoke for itself, and was a thorough condemnation of the work which had been going on in the Mines Department. In regard to State batteries he was glad to have the assurance of the Minister that the hon. gentleman intended to appoint someone capable of doing something better than had been done in the past, and he hoped the Minister would be successful in obtaining someone to fill that position.

MR. TROY moved that progress be reported.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:--

Ayes	...	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	...	18
				—
Majority against	...	...	...	7
				—

ATES.
Mr. Bath
Mr. Heilmann
Mr. Holman
Mr. Horan
Mr. Hudson
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Troy
Mr. Underwood
Mr. Ware
Mr. Collier (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Brown
Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Davies
Mr. Eddy
Mr. Ewing
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Price
Mr. Smith
Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Layman (Teller).

Motion thus negatived; the discussion continued.

[MR. ILLINGWORTH took the Chair.]

MR. TROY regretted that despite repeated applications from Mt. Magnet the Inquiry Battery Board was not sent to the Murchison. In his electorate were three batteries concerning which grave complaints were made from time to time, and the Minister promised an investigation, promised that the inquiry board would visit Boogardie, and subsequently promised that an inspector would be sent there. A month had elapsed since the application, and there should be no longer delay. When he (Mr. Troy) was first elected, many complaints regarding the Boogardie battery had been lodged with the Minister, and serious charges were made against the manager of the Lennonville battery. An inquiry was held; and the gentleman appointed to take charge of the Boogardie and Lennonville batteries made a creditable record, for when he took them over they were in a shocking state, but few complaints had since been made, mining conditions having generally improved in the localities. The Boogardie battery was one of the best conducted in the State, the returns being much more satisfactory than at any prior time. To many matters, however, the manager was unable to attend. The ores were low-grade, and the extraction more difficult than in other localities; hence the values were not so high over the plate as in the cyanide treatment. To ascertain the real values the Minister should publish the cyanide results when publishing results of monthly crushings. Probably no locality had greater possibilities than Boogardie, where the bodies of ore, though mostly low-grade, were large, some of the mines showing good profits. The sands treatment was not

giving complete satisfaction. The sands were fairly "mullocky;" they held considerable water, and could not absorb sufficient solution. But the residues were often nearly as valuable as the sands. That was unsatisfactory; for the prospector, particularly in a low-grade district, needed the best possible return. Let the Government revert to the old process by which the sand was first dried before being placed in the vats. When screened and broken up, the sands were better able to absorb the solution than in the continuous process.

[2 a.m., Wed.]

MR. TROY (continuing): These were serious matters. It would cost more to return to the old process, but as we charged 10s. a ton for cyaniding it was only fair the prospectors should get the best possible treatment. At Boogardie the Minister could make the changes asked for. Another matter that had caused dissatisfaction was in connection with the assay value of sands. Disputes arose between the Government and the prospectors. To provide against that, sealed samples of the sands should be taken. At Lennonville and Boogardie the gold was not paid for at its fine value. The gold was worth £4 4s. 11d. fine value, but the prospector was only paid £4. In getting 75 per cent. from the sands, when the 4s. 11d. was deducted the prospector obtained really not more than 69 per cent. from the Government. The Prospectors' Conference had drawn attention to that matter. The batteries had not been efficient in the past because in many instances they had not been run full time. If they could be kept going full time they could be made to pay at a smaller crushing rate. The charges at Boogardie could be lowered because so much stone was crushed there and the battery was now paying. A few years ago it was not paying because it was half the time idle, and when a battery was idle the administration costs and the pumping costs continued and were charged against the battery. We could not make the batteries a success if they were kept running half-time. We should give a reduction on large parcels to keep the batteries going, and then we could make them pay; and we should be more liberal in connection with measure-

ment. Then we would do better with the system. Attention was drawn in the report of the Batteries Inquiry Board to the uncleanly condition of batteries. When Mr. Allom, the present manager at Boogardie, took over the Boogardie battery it was in a very unclean and battered state, and the battery was fairly a rattle-trap, but Mr. Allom put it in order and the plant was now up to date. If we got gentlemen of that class the system would be paying better. We should divide the State into battery districts, and one manager in each district should be appointed a travelling inspector and pay quarterly visits to the other batteries in his district. We would thus obtain more efficiency. There had not been efficient inspection in the past. Too much was left to the battery manager, so that he became careless. At Black Range a prospector had been robbed by the department. The manager had too much to do. Black Range was so far from railway communication that when repairs were necessary the battery was idle, and the manager had a good deal to worry about and could not pay attention to the battery which in better circumstances he could do. At one time 7,000 tons of stone were at grass waiting crushing. There were tributors anxious to realise on their stone and leave the district, and they pushed the manager to get their stone crushed. The result was that the manager rushed free milling stone through, and in the tailings there were 20zs. 6 grains per ton. The prospector was only paid 75 per cent. on the assay of the sands, and consequently lost a considerable quantity of gold. A prospector had 104 tons crushed, and because he could not get his sands treated by the Government he sent them to a private individual who had put up a small cyanide plant. A good deal of the sands were treated by this individual. In the meantime the Government erected a cyanide plant, and the prospector then transferred his cyanide work to the Government plant. The person to whom he had first given the sands and who had entered into an agreement with the prospector, sued him and obtained a verdict for £184 5s. 10d. That was due to the maladministration of the battery at Black Range. He did not say that it was due to the manager altogether, because he

had too much to do. In connection with the slimes, there was no reason why in a locality like Boogardie and Black Range the Government should not erect a slimes plant. There were sufficient slimes to warrant the erection of a plant, and if the Minister did not consider the erection of a plant necessary the slimes might be broken up and mixed with the sands, so that the prospectors would obtain some of the gold in the slimes. In connection with the many public batteries, the offices were ill-equipped, and as a result the officers did not give that satisfaction in making assays they otherwise would. A dispute occurred at Lennouville and Boogardie as to the assay of slimes. A private firm gave fully four or five dwts. higher than the Government assayer, and on a new assay being made by the Government official a different result was obtained. The machine for weighing was not up to date at the Government assay office, and while that obtained, the prospectors would not be satisfied with Government assays. The Minister should supply good appliances so that assays would not be disputed in the future. At the prospectors' conference the question of portable batteries was discussed, and he believed the Minister had tried one at Coolgardie. The portable batteries, he believed, had not been a success in some localities, but they would open up a locality and prove whether a small permanent battery should be erected or not.

THE MINISTER said he intended trying portable batteries.

MR. TROY: At Paynesville many of the mines had been discarded, but latterly nine leases had been taken up, and there the prospectors were raising good stone from the leases; but they had to cart their stone 40 miles to the Boogardie battery. A portable battery might prove whether a permanent battery would be successful. At another locality called Youanme, in the Lake Barlee country, there was great difficulty in getting fresh water, and it had to be obtained by carting 40 miles. A number of prospectors had gone to this place and taken up a lease, and they had to cart their stone 40 miles to Boogardie; but as the stone returned 40zs., it paid. There was no encouragement for prospectors to go out there, because all stone would not yield

40zs. If a small battery were erected there it would encourage prospectors to go out, and if the country were prospected it would open up a mining belt like that existing at Black Rauge and farther north. The Minister was not at all fair to the present Superintendent of State Batteries if he intended to displace him from his present position, without giving him a trial. When he (Mr. Troy) came to Perth he was a little prejudiced against that officer, because he heard he was responsible for all the maladministration in the Mines Department. But his experience had taught him that this officer was not to blame for the maladministration, but very often he was accused of maladministration and blame was placed on his shoulders which in many instances should rest on the Minister and in many cases on the other administrative officers. This report excused that gentleman from almost any blame in connection with the maladministration. It pointed out that he had no opportunity to carry on the administration of the department in a manner desired by the country. It appeared the officer had been humbugged and harassed by other officers and the Minister, and that he was too pliant a tool, and the maladministration at present existing had resulted. That man had not been guilty of all that had been said against him. Against his own judgment he had been compelled to do certain work. The report said that outside the public officers of the department had in different degrees signally failed in their duty to the superintendent. In other words they did not advise the superintendent correctly. We were assured that this public battery system could never be carried out successfully under its present management because the superintendent did not have a sufficient staff. The board said that the superintendent required a staff consisting of the chief executive officer, chief executive officer's clerk, engineer and designer, metallurgist, chief mechanical draftsman, assistant mechanical draftsman, chief accountant, and eight in the office staff. The superintendent in Perth only had about two clerks, yet he was expected to carry out this department satisfactorily. It was quite impossible for any man to do it. Besides the staff referred to, the

board recommended that there should be an outside office at Kalgoorlie, where there should be a working erecting engineer, a chief inspector, an assistant inspector, and a clerk. Ultimately the report said the blame rested on the executive officer, but that had been due to the fact that Ministerial influence had been brought to bear, and he could not do anything except by the mandates of his Minister; yet the Minister talked about displacing him because that man had failed in doing what the country expected of him, and because he lent too willing an ear to the advice of his Minister. The report continued that the head office work in Perth appeared to have required the whole attention of the chief executive officer, who was therefore prevented from visiting the plants he controlled, the outside administration being left to look after itself. How could the superintendent check the work of his inspectors, who were said to have misled him? The unsatisfactory work was no fault of his. The report farther stated that the appointment of the superintendent was rendered somewhat inoperative by reason of directions and counter-directions issued by successive administrations, temporary expedients being adopted without reference to the development of a fixed policy, and that this appeared to have been a feature of the so-called system. This was in fact a mere devil-may-care contrivance first introduced as an experiment and gradually enlarged. The board stated they found it on record that the Minister, the Under Secretary for Mines, and outside correspondents all brought influence to bear on the superintendent, who should have held his position unaffected by any such indiscriminate advice, he being too pliant to the pressure put upon him, having to do as he was told.

THE MINISTER: Give the date of the minute.

MR. TROY: No matter what Minister was at fault, the system was badly conducted from the start. If placed in like circumstances to the Commissioner of Railways, the superintendent could have used his own judgment instead of being obliged to act against his will. The report exonerated him from personal responsibility. Any jury would find him not guilty. Let the Minister give the

man a chance to prove his fitness for the position, and if he failed to prove fit let him make room for another. The superintendent had five or six years' experience of the department, and knew its weak points; hence he should be better qualified than an outsider.

MR. HOLMAN: The Minister made much of the loss on public batteries in 1904, but forgot to state that he administered the batteries for seven or eight months of that year; hence two-thirds of the responsibility rested on him. The Minister should not quote that list as being derogatory to the Labour Ministers. This year, for the first time for a long time we were to cease spending revenue on the erection of State batteries; but he would rather see a deficiency in our revenue than any departure from the system that had obtained during the past few years.

MR. JOHNSON: There was another matter in connection with the circular issued and previously referred to. The present Minister wrote a minute asking how it was that, although instructions were given to forward the circular to the various associations on the 17th, no action was taken until the 26th August, and whether it was due to neglect or according to instructions. The Minister now insinuated that the officers were to blame, but forgot to mention that a satisfactory explanation was given. The Superintendent of State Batteries wrote to the following effect: He had not seen the jacket until the morning of the 23rd August, and being aware that a change of Ministers was taking place, doubted the wisdom of issuing it without reference to the incoming Minister; so he prepared a rough draft showing the alterations to the circular to be sent to all places where a battery was situated and not to the general secretary of the Leaseholders and Prospectors' Association, which was pinned into the jacket and awaited typing in the ordinary course of the typist work, but it had since been removed by someone, and he understood that when it reached the Minister no action was taken, and the next he heard was that the circular was not to go out. Clearly if the Minister desired to put the blame on the superintendent there was no blame attachable. Instructions were given on the 17th to

the Secretary for Mines. That officer could not deal with the matter immediately, and it was not until the 23rd that the superintendent received the instructions; but as on the previous day the Labour Government had sent in their resignations, the superintendent felt that there was a possibility that the incoming Minister would not agree to it and held it over, and the Minister stopped the issue of the circular. Yet the Minister told the people at Kookynie that he did not stop it. Probably the Minister had a lapse of memory. The Minister repeatedly made incorrect statements. We could not understand a Minister doing that, knowing that the statements were incorrect. The Minister had said that rebates were given in one direction and refused in another, yet we found the Minister writing to the Superintendent of State Batteries asking in a long minute "Please give a list of rebate charges at the various batteries in the last four months, where made and to whom, and please give instances when applications for rebates during the same period were refused." The Superintendent of State Batteries replied, "I have not been able to trace any refusal to a request outside the numerous applications to participate in the 25 per cent. on large parcels." The files showed where applications had been granted, but the superintendent could not trace where any refusal had been made. Yet the Minister said that the Labour Government refused a rebate to certain persons and granted it to others, and the Minister made the same statement to-night.

THE MINISTER: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Either the Minister or the Superintendent of State Batteries was absolutely incorrect. Having had experience of both parties he was inclined to believe the statement of the Superintendent of State Batteries.

Item—Superintendent, £450 :

MR. HOLMAN: Was it the intention of the Minister to deal with the duties of the Superintendent of State Batteries?

THE MINISTER: The department had grown beyond the capacity of the officer. He did not intend to do anything in a hurry. The whole matter would have to be gone into carefully. Someone would have to be appointed

with wide experience and a knowledge of metallurgy as head of the department. That would mean that the present officer would have to take a secondary position in the department. He hoped something would be done without inflicting any injury on the present superintendent ; but there must be a change.

MR. HOLMAN : Had a fair opportunity been given to the present officer to improve his system ? He maintained not. No officer should be interfered with until he had had an opportunity of proving the value of his services to the State, and the report of the Battery Board had proved that this officer had been hampered in carrying out his duties. If force of circumstances compelled the acceptance by this officer of a secondary position, it was to be hoped his salary would not be reduced.

MR. JOHNSON : From the statement of the Minister, it appeared that this officer was to be made the scapegoat for the maladministration of the battery system in the past. It was grossly unfair, and a miserable action to take. We had a board appointed by the Minister to go into this question, and the board said there was nothing wrong with the officer, except that he had been guilty of certain indiscretions ; but they exonerated him from that because he was simply carrying out the instructions of the Under Secretary and the Minister. Yet the Minister stated he intended to disrate the officer. We could not tolerate anything of that kind. The report said that this officer was a good officer, and would be better if it had not been for political influence. This was a state of affairs we could not allow to pass without protest. It was the miserable action of the Minister, and he was a miserable man to take such action.

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. member should not continue in that strain.

MR. JOHNSON : Perhaps one used words which one was not justified in using in the Assembly, but how could one keep his feelings on a matter of this kind ? The Minister, in spite of the recommendations of the board, intended to disrate the officer so that the Minister could get out of the position he had got into. If satisfaction was not obtained inside the House, it would have to be obtained outside. The officer should not

be made to suffer because of the incompetence of a Minister of the Crown.

MR. BATH : When discussing other Estimates he had occasion to refer to the fact that the Treasurer and Minister for Education silently acquiesced in the humiliation of his own followers and supporters in connection with the amended education regulations, and the withdrawal of them. We had an exemplification of a similar line of action in regard to this officer. If this officer was made the victim of the misdeeds of the Minister, it would stand to the eternal disgrace of the Government.

MR. HOLMAN : It was unfair to this officer that this vote should go without some explanation from the Minister as to what was to be done. The Minister should not use his position to get rid of an officer and perhaps appoint one of his personal friends instead.

THE PREMIER : Was the member in order in saying that the Minister intended to appoint one of his friends ?

MR. HOLMAN did not say so. He said perhaps it was the intention of the Minister to appoint one of his personal friends to this position. We had too many underhand appointments made this year already. This was a most despicable action on the part of a Minister to throw the responsibility on an officer when he was not justified in taking that responsibility. All men would make mistakes. In the Mines Department the State batteries were open to a great many mistakes. It would not have been anything against the Minister if he had admitted making a mistake simply because he did not thoroughly understand the position he occupied. One would like a statement from the Minister himself that this officer would not be unjustly dealt with.

[3 a.m., Wed.]

MR. SCADDAN : The act of injustice to a public servant proposed to be meted out by the present Minister was in his opinion unparalleled in the history of the State. The Minister said the appointment would not be a political one ; but from the attitude adopted by the hon. gentleman in making a political dismissal, the possibilities were that the appointment would be a political one. In view of that fact he hoped the members of the Cabinet and the Premier in particular,

for whom he had every respect and much esteem, would not allow any public servant to be treated in the manner proposed by the Minister for Mines. It was a disgraceful thing that the Minister should calmly make a statement that he intended to put the whole responsibility upon a public servant such as the Superintendent of State Batteries.

MR. TROY : The report clearly pointed out that the superintendent could not have acted otherwise than he did, owing to the fact that he was influenced by the Minister, and also by the Secretary for Mines. The superintendent was influenced against his own judgment by the Minister and other officers in carrying on the administration of the department. A great injustice had been done to this officer, who in his opinion had not been guilty of maladministration. He had been made a scapegoat. If the Minister and the superintendent were both placed on their trial regarding the administration of the public batteries and this report was to be the only evidence used against them, the Minister would be found guilty of maladministration in a greater degree than would the Superintendent of State Batteries. If the Ministry meted out an injustice to any man it would surely come home to them. He hoped members on the Government side of the House would urge upon the Government the necessity of at least giving this man a show so that he might be able to prove whether he had been guilty or not.

MR. HOLMAN : The Minister had told us that it was his intention to make some appointment to this position and disrate the man at present occupying the post. That, in face of the report we had from the Battery Board, showed beyond a doubt that the Minister had some motive ahead, and that he intended to reward some person by making an appointment and at the same time inflict an injustice upon an officer who had not had an opportunity in the past. In regard to the erection of a cyanide plant at Meekatharra, the Minister would only authorise a certain amount of money to be expended, and that money was practically thrown away, because at present the cyanide plant there was absolutely useless. Appendix I. stated that the Minister having given instructions for a cyanide plant

costing not more than £200 to be erected at Meekatharra, the superintendent recommended certain leaching vats, filter beds, etcetera.

THE CHAIRMAN : What had this to do with the item "Superintendent" ?

MR. HOLMAN : This was a report by the superintendent, who would be unjustly treated if disrated.

MR. HOLMAN moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. HOLMAN : Had the Minister acted on the superintendent's minute, hundreds of pounds would have been saved; yet the superintendent was to be made a scapegoat for the Minister's mismanagement. The superintendent, referring to cyaniding at Southern Cross—

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. member was evidently wasting the time of the Committee.

MR. HOLMAN denied the statement. This matter had not previously been before the Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN : Did the hon. member move that the ruling be disagreed with ?

MR. HOLMAN was speaking on a pertinent question.

THE CHAIRMAN : The hon. member must take his seat.

MR. HOLMAN : The ruling was most unfair.

THE CHAIRMAN : Did the hon. member dispute the ruling ?

MR. HOLMAN : It was useless to dispute anything. He would not dispute it with the crowd on the opposite side. It was a totally unfair crowd; absolutely rotten.

MR. JOHNSON : The Minister had indicated his intention to do what the Opposition considered an injustice to the Superintendent of Batteries. As the officer could not defend himself, members should be allowed to defend him. It was a miserable action, and unprecedented in this House, for a Minister to attack an officer of his own department. Other Ministers had always been ready to defend their officers, even if these were obviously wrong, the officers being unable to defend themselves. Surely in these circumstances some latitude must be allowed to defend an officer now asleep and unaware that

the Minister intended shortly to deprive him of bread and butter.

THE CHAIRMAN: The fullest latitude had been given.

MR. HOLMAN: No latitude whatever.

THE CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member proposed to read long documents, he could not be allowed to proceed.

MR. JOHNSON: If he were not allowed to defend this officer, one final appeal must be made on behalf of the wife and family.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was quite in order. The reference was to the preceding speaker.

MR. JOHNSON was deeply moved when he found the Minister shelving responsibility on an officer not here to defend himself, that officer being he believed appointed by the present Minister to the position of Superintendent of State Batteries, and being obliged to introduce the present system. If the officer had been free from political influence, the influence of the Under Secretary for Mines, and Ministerial interference, the State batteries would not be in their present position, which was neither satisfactory to the Minister nor to customers. The Batteries Inquiry Board, chosen by the Minister, investigated the question and upheld the superintendent. Notwithstanding, the Minister would make that officer the culprit to cover the Minister's misdeeds. The board recommended that the superintendent was hampered by political influence and that he had managers under him appointed by the Minister and not according to his own desires. The present staff was not sufficient to cope with the great work of the department. On page 18 of the report the board stated that in their opinion the work to be undertaken by the clerical officers required the work to be performed by a commissioner.

THE CHAIRMAN: That had already been read.

MR. JOHNSON: Was it ruled that members could not defend this particular vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was not in order in reading a report that had already been read during debate.

MR. JOHNSON: It could not be said that members were wasting time in quot-

ing a report which had only been laid on the table to-night. The board recommended a chief executive officer at £600, whereas the Superintendent of State Batteries now received £450. The board recommended a chief executive clerk, £225; an engineer and designer, £500; a metallurgist, £500—the Minister wanted to get rid of the present superintendent because he was not a metallurgist—also a chief mechanical draftsman £300, with assistant £180, and a chief accountant at £300; also eight officers at £1,200, making in all £3,805, whereas the Estimates provided £765. If the Minister disrated the superintendent he would be doing an injustice to the officer and to the officer's wife and family. The board said the Minister was the culprit, but the Minister was trying to make this unfortunate officer the culprit. It was deplorable that it should be left to the Opposition to protect this officer. It was no credit to the Minister, and it was far less credit to the members who sat on the Ministerial cross-benches. They alone could influence the Minister, and they should raise their voices to protect this officer or, if they had no sympathy with the officer, to protect his wife and family.

MR. HORAN: It was only fair that he should add his humble testimony to the work done by the Superintendent of State Batteries. He hoped no drastic course would be taken with regard to that officer, not having had the slightest occasion to differ from him in the conduct of the State batteries. This officer had been hampered to a great extent by redtapeism, unintentionally as far as the Minister was concerned. If the recommendations of the officer had been given effect to, much benefit would have resulted. But other persons unfortunately had prevented that officer from carrying out his desires, and now his actions had been condemned. The Minister wisely suggested the formation of a board to deal with forfeiture cases and other complicated questions that occasionally required an experienced lawyer rather than a mining expert to deal with. The Minister might see his way to separate his department in such manner as to effect better service to the country. If anything could be said against this officer, officially or personally,

he would be the last to endorse such an expression of opinion.

Mr. COLLIER moved that progress be reported.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	...	17

Majority against ... 6

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brown
Mr. Collier	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Daglish	Mr. Davies
Mr. Holman	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Horns	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Troy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Underwood	Mr. Male
Mr. Ware	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Layman (Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

Item—Temporary labour, including wages of managers, etc., £53,400:

Mr. SCADDAN: What additional officers was it intended to appoint, and would the salaries be deducted from this amount or was provision made for the salaries of such officers?

THE MINISTER: If no money was available the amount could be taken from this sum. He had refrained as far as possible from dealing with the arguments submitted by members. He had pointed out that the work of the department had grown beyond the capacity and capability of the superintendent.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not refer to the superintendent.

THE MINISTER: If necessary to make an appointment, the officer would be paid out of this amount.

Mr. HOLMAN: What steps had been taken in connection with the complaints regarding several battery managers during the past 12 months? In some cases managers had failed to give satisfaction, and the reports made by the inspectors had proved beyond doubt that grave dissatisfaction existed, for 34 out of 36 prospectors crushing at public batteries had made complaints about their treatment. Some consideration should be shown to those who used our public batteries and every assistance given to the prospector.

He asked for a return a month or two ago in regard to gold recovered from products, and it showed that about 15 or 16 batteries returned a value of between £3,000 and £4,000. Some returned no gold at all. The expenditure on salaries in the State Batteries Department last year was £52,960, and this year it was put at £53,400, or an increase of £440. There would be at least one additional battery, and a large amount of expenditure would have to take place there. That battery would be employed in all probability this year. He supposed there would be eight or nine employees, and it would mean an expenditure of from £1,500 to £2,000 a year. He would like to know what economies the Minister expected to effect on last year's vote, which would allow him to spend so much extra money in this direction.

THE MINISTER: In regard to the specific matter mentioned by the hon. member, one could not go so far as to demand the resignation of the manager. If the hon. member would call, he could see the report. One could not make public a report dealing with the character of a manager, and would not go so far as to give the hon. member a copy. [Mr. HOLMAN: The hon. gentleman promised a copy.] He had it even suppressed from the battery report, because if it were published the department might easily get into trouble.

Mr. HOLMAN: The intention was to make a change, was it not?

THE MINISTER: We might, he thought, do that. The report did not show the officer to be a bad manager. If there was a little friction we should do well to consider the advisability of placing him somewhere else. At the time there was no opportunity of doing that. Moreover just at the time the Battery Board were making inquiries in regard to charges against various managers, he did not wish to make a change until the charges had been to some extent investigated. If we found that the manager might be doing good work but might have made bad friends through want of tact or something, we could fix up the case.

Mr. HOLMAN: The case was tried in court.

THE MINISTER would be only too pleased to let the hon. member see the

report, and the hon. member would then see that the action taken by him (the Minister) was quite justified.

MR. H. BROWN moved—

That the Committee do now divide.

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

Ayes	...	...	16
Noes	...	...	11
Majority for			5

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Brown	Mr. Bath
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Collier
Mr. Davies	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Eddy	Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Holman
Mr. Gordon	Mr. Horan
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Layman	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Male	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Ware
Mr. N. J. Moore	Mr. Troy (Teller).
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. A. J. Wilson	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Hardwick (Teller).	

Motion thus passed.

Question stated.

AS TO PROPOSING REDUCTIONS.

MR. JOHNSON: We were discussing item three.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was no question put with regard to items.

MR. JOHNSON: Suppose he had moved that the item be reduced by £1, and it was resolved that the Committee do now divide, would not his amendment be put?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: After this we must move that every item be reduced.

Vote put, and passed on the voices.

Vote—*Mines Water Supply*, £16,328.

MR. TROY regretted that the vote should be reduced by £2,000 as compared with last year's, though hundreds of districts required water.

THE MINISTER: The decrease was in wages only.

MR. TROY: Then fewer men would be employed in sinking wells and dams. Meekatharra, Lennonville, Black Range, and Higginsville were languishing for want of water. In the regrettable absence of Government supporters from the

House he would not farther discuss the matter.

MR. JOHNSON: This branch of the department deserved encouragement, for to it was due the success of Black Range and all developments within a hundred-mile radius of that centre during the régime of the Labour Government. The vote should be increased. Had the Works and Mines departments arranged to place within the control of this branch the stock routes within the goldfields area? When Minister for Mines he (Mr. Johnson) endeavoured to arrange this.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The stock routes were now controlled by the Mines Water Supply, under the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. JOHNSON was glad he had succeeded in bringing that about. At any rate he congratulated the Minister for having followed the lead.

[4 a.m., Wed.]

THE MINISTER: Apparently members had not carefully considered the Estimates. The reduction was in regard to the condenser at Norseman. Now, instead of condensing water for the people at Norseman, we supplied them with fresh water from dams.

MR. HOLMAN: We should maintain the wells in the back country better than they had been looked after in the past. He had often reported to Ministers cases of neglect, but steps were taken to put the wells in proper repair whenever he made a report to the department. It should not be left to an outsider to make complaints. Wells should be covered so that kangaroos and other animals could not fall into them and spoil the water. He had made application for wells, but there was no provision on the Estimates for them. He hoped that when the loan proposals were brought down his requests would not be forgotten.

MR. HORAN: Good work was done in the North-West by this department, but buckets were frequently found damaged and windlasses out of order. It would be better to follow the suggestion of the late member for Pilbarra, Mr. Isdell, and erect windmills on these wells to work automatically.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Purchase and treatment of copper ore, £1,150:

THE MINISTER: A small amount of this vote was in liquidation of outstanding accounts, but the greater portion of it was spent in having a valuation made. There were a few small debts in regard to the cost of the smelter, some accounts not having been paid before the last financial year expired. There was also the manager's salary and his expenses to Perth. There were no other liabilities in connection with this matter. The whole thing was now entirely ended. In connection with the purchase of ore the total sum payable to the department in connection with returns from the ore and the sale of the smelter was £18,126 3s. 8d.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Mining School, £4,785:

MR. TROY: Had the Government any intention of establishing a school of mines on the Murchison where students could get the usual mining education?

THE MINISTER: No; but he would urge the hon. member to push forward an application to have a technical school established on the field and to get the nucleus of a museum. He (the Minister) would do all in his power to assist the hon. member. We should try to make the Kalgoorlie School of Mines the premier School of Mines in Australia, but we should not confine the facilities for mining education to the Eastern Goldfields.

Vote put and passed.

Vote — Explosives and Analytical, £4,050:

MR. HEITMANN: The Chief Inspector of Explosives did not visit the Murchison.

THE MINISTER: This officer had an important position to occupy.

MR. BATH: And was a good officer.

THE MINISTER: We could well afford to give a higher salary than £450. The department was carefully managed. No fault could be found with the administration of the department.

MR. HOLMAN: This officer had lent considerable assistance to insurance companies who were engaged in a recent action at law. Was the State re-

munerated by the insurance companies for the services of the Government Analyst?

THE MINISTER: Information would be obtained. Most decidedly the insurance companies should pay.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Inspection of Machinery, £7,245:

Item—Chief Inspector of Machinery and Chairman of Board of Examiners, £450:

MR. SCADDAN: There would be opportunity to discuss this department when members were considering the report of the select committee on the Gwalia boiler explosion. He hoped that would be at an early date. The Minister must be congratulated on having at this late hour carried out some of the reforms suggested last year by him (Mr. Scaddan) in connection with curtailing some of the expenses in the head office. The Chief Inspector had now been turned out of his large office, where he was situated more comfortably than any Minister of the Crown, and compelled to occupy the smaller room previously occupied by his staff. The Chief Inspector had been granted five months' leave of absence, apparently special leave. Was the officer entitled to leave of absence in the ordinary course?

THE MINISTER: Leave must have been approved by the Public Service Commissioner, and probably because a long record of service warranted it. The matter would be inquired into to see how the leave was obtained. It must have been obtained through the Public Service Commissioner; otherwise it would have come before him (the Minister).

MR. HEITMANN: Who would act as Chief Inspector?

THE MINISTER: Inspector Gill.

MR. SCADDAN: The latest appointment to the department. It was doubtful whether the Chief Inspector was entitled to extensive leave. It seemed peculiar that when a select committee was inquiring into the department the officer should make application for extensive leave. It was unwise to grant it.

THE MINISTER: Leave was applied for before the select committee was appointed.

MR. SCADDAN : It would have been better had the Chief Inspector postponed his holiday until the report of the select committee was considered by the House and by the Minister. Mr. Gill was appointed acting-Chief Inspector over the heads of old and faithful servants ; for instance the inspector at Kalgoorlie, Mr. Latimer, who was highly spoken of by the Minister. Last year we had increased Mr. Latimer's salary because the Minister was anxious to place the Kalgoorlie inspector on a higher grade than the others. Mr. Latimer should naturally have secured the appointment. There appeared to be favoritism in the appointment of Mr. Gill.

THE MINISTER : Mr. Latimer was not brought down to Perth because it was felt that he could not be spared from the goldfields. Mr. Gill was an officer whom he had only met within the last fortnight. He was appointed by Mr. Hastie, when Minister, at £360. It was a special appointment made with a view of getting a special officer. Mr. Gill was afterwards reduced to £280. The Chief Inspector recommended Mr. Gill as being, outside Mr. Latimer, the most efficient inspector to take charge of the department during his absence.

MR. HEITMANN : The select committee appointed to inquire into the boiler explosion at Gwalia had pointed out that there was a laxity in the inspection of boilers in the past. If the chief inspector devoted more time to seeing that his officers carried out their duties, it would be preferable to sitting in his office and examining candidates for certificates. It was too much to pay £450 to this officer to waste his time in examining a few candidates for engine-drivers' certificates.

[4.30 a.m., Wednesday.]

MR. HORAN : The Minister should satisfy himself that this officer was fully qualified for the position. It would be advantageous to the department if someone were instructed to examine the inspector himself and find out if he knew what he was trying to inculcate in other people, and what he expected them to understand. When he (Mr. Horan) was at Pilbarra, he saw at Barkan, on a mine, disreputable boilers badly conducted, and the machinery was recklessly controlled. When he came back to Perth,

he found that this machinery was exempt from the operation of the Act. No regulations had been gazetted including the Pilbarra district. He asked the Minister to include that district and to appoint an inspector or two to do what they could in that district. A man's life was just as valuable in Pilbarra as in the centres of population.

Item—Inspectors, £2,883 :

MR. HEITMANN : In comparing the salaries of the inspectors of boilers and machinery with the inspectors of mines, there was a great difference. Seeing that we had as inspectors of machinery men who had passed examinations and had served their time at trades, the salary was too small. Not only were the inspectors of machinery paid less than the mining inspectors, but their daily allowance was a good deal less. The officers should be paid at least equal salaries.

MR. SCADDAN : While not saying that these inspectors were receiving sufficient salary, he did not agree that the inspectors under the Machinery Act had as much responsibility as the inspectors of mines. If a mines inspector had only to inspect a cage in which three thousand men were carried every day, he had more responsibility than an inspector of machinery had. There was no comparison between the two positions. There seemed to be anomalies in the way in which the officers' salaries were regulated. Some officers who had been long in the service were assistant inspectors while those taken on recently were called inspectors, yet the assistant inspectors were receiving a larger salary than the inspectors were. Since the last Estimates were passed, the Inspection of Machinery department had taken over the inspection work of the Harbours and Light department. He believed there was a considerable amount of friction caused between the inspector of harbours and light department and the chief inspector of machinery. Mr. Ramage objected to coming under an officer who, he contended, was not fitted for the position he held and not fitted to supervise his work. The chief inspector of machinery desired to extend his powers with the object of extending his salary later on. The department gained nothing

by extending their supervision over the harbours and light department, and he believed this inspector had no power whatever. The harbour department controlled the work although the inspector of machinery carried out the inspections. This department seemed to be getting outside the control of the Mines Department. At one time it only inspected the machinery on mines; now its jurisdiction was extended and the department was not sufficiently under the control of the Mines Department. It might be wise to find another department in which the inspectors could be controlled. He believed an injustice had been done to Mr. Ramage.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If any other Minister would take over this department, he (the Minister) would be only too glad to hand it over to him. It might be wise to put the inspection of machinery and factories under one control. This year we had taken over the navigation work, with one inspector less than had been the case in the past. Mr. Ramage resigned from the navigation department and we had to make provision for his salary for seven months. In the future his work would be done by other officers. The number of inspectors had been increased considerably during the past 18 months or two years. He (the Minister) had done his best to try and keep down the expenses of this department. He had agreed to an increase of salaries to some of the officers of the department, for he recognised that £280, with the amount of travelling expenses, was little enough for the inspectors. All round there was an earnest desire to cut down the expenses of this department.

Item—Examination of engine-drivers, inspectors, etc., £33 :

MR. HEITMANN: Was one of the board of examiners a permanent officer in one of the departments and receiving in addition to his permanent salary fees for this work.

THE MINISTER: Mr. Arrow was an officer of the Mines Water Supply Department, and received some small amount, he believed, for this work. Next year he hoped to go carefully into the question as to whether there should be a travelling board or not. He would like to have a travelling board if we could

afford it, but he thought the expenses would be too great. He did not believe in giving facilities to one portion of the country which he could not give to another, and he was not going to appoint a travelling board to go to Kalgoorlie and Menzies, and not to Cue.

Item—Incidentals, including postage, stationery, advertising, equipment, instruments, travelling, shoeing, forage, printing, etc., £2,150 :

MR. HORAN: Did this amount include the cost of reserved compartments in a railway carriage for the chief inspector of machinery, Mr. Matthews?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If he thought for a moment that the department paid for a reserved compartment in a railway carriage for an officer, he would deal very promptly with that officer. The officers received their travelling expenses only.

MR. SCADDAN: It would be interesting to know what it cost the department in travelling expenses for the Chief Inspector during the year. This officer was provided with an all-lines pass, but did very little travelling. He used his pass chiefly for travelling on the suburban lines and to picnics. The Chief Inspector accompanied, without being asked, the Boiler Explosion Select Committee to Gwalia. There could not be too much work attached to this officer's position if he could go about the country.

THE MINISTER: The select committee was inquiring into something which reflected on the department, and he (the Minister) had told the inspector to accompany the members.

MR. SCADDAN: The chief inspector did not require telling; he was only too willing to go. The select committee were inquiring into the administration of the department. Did the superintendent of Batteries accompany the battery board all over the State? The chief inspector had an opportunity of giving evidence before the select committee, and he was admitted to the meetings of the committee in Perth. Travelling expenses in this department amounted to a considerable sum, more than was justified. Ministers did not pay sufficient attention to the travelling expenses of officers.

MR. JOHNSON: This was a branch of the department where considerable

economy could be effected. The incidental vote was rather large for a small department, and the work performed by the department did not justify the expenditure.

THE MINISTER: The Labour Government appointed two additional inspectors.

MR. JOHNSON: When leaving the Mines Department he had pointed out to the present Minister that there was too much extravagance in the department.

THE MINISTER: Mr. Gill was appointed during the term of the Labour Ministry by Mr. Hastie, and Mr. Tickle was an additional inspector appointed by the same Government. These were extra inspectors. If officers were appointed, then provision must be made for their travelling expenses. We had brought down the clerical staff, and were getting rid of Mr. Ramage, who would not be replaced. There had been too much redtapeism in this department in the past.

MR. JOHNSON: It was true that during the term of the Labour Government, when Mr. Hastie was Minister for Mines, the Inspection of Machinery Act was passed, and owing to the passage of that measure representation was made to the Minister that an extra staff was necessary to administer the Act. He (Mr. Johnson) disagreed with it, and the Minister knew that when leaving the department he (Mr. Johnson) had told him that the expenses required reducing considerably.

MR. HORAN: Would the Minister give an assurance that he would take some action to have the North-West territory gazetted a district under the Inspection of Machinery Act?

THE MINISTER: The matter would receive consideration, and if possible he would gazette that country a district under the Inspection of Machinery Act, provided he could throw the responsibility on the owners of the machinery to have it properly tested, for the Government could not afford to send an inspector there.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

This completed the Mines votes.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at two minutes to 5 o'clock Wednesday morning, until 4:30 in the afternoon.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 14th November, 1906.

	PAGE
Question: Clerk Assistant's Dual Duties ...	2877
Bills: Municipal Corporations, Com. resumed, progress ...	2878
Land Tax Assessment, as to Amendments, remarks on a conference ...	2892

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **COLONIAL SECRETARY:** Bylaws of Port Hedland Roads Board, watering-places.

QUESTION—CLERK ASSISTANT'S DUAL DUTIES.

HON. J. M. DREW: I am requested by the select committee appointed to consider the Land Act Amendment Bill to ask the Minister, without notice, whether the Government will make arrangements while the Legislative Council is sitting to relieve the Clerk Assistant of his duties as clerk of the Executive Council. The committee has been somewhat impeded in its work owing to the fact that when the Clerk Assistant's services were required, they were called into requisition by the Executive Council. As is well known, the Clerk Assistant is an expert parliamentary draftsman, and his services are invaluable to a select committee when it is necessary to make amendments to Bills which the committee has under its control. I trust that the Government will take into consideration