

was under consideration, the officers of the Crown Law Department pointed out that when new districts were formed or a subdivision was made in regard to roads districts, some difficulty was experienced because where boards had borrowed money and struck rates there was a difference of opinion as regarded the allotment of the unexpended money in the reconstructed districts. A good deal of annoyance has been caused in the administration of the Act not only to the department but also to ratepayers. When a district is so formed there is almost invariably an amount of arrears of rates outstanding and under existing conditions the roads board that struck the rate can claim the amount of the rate then due. These alterations to the various clauses have been made—they are really only slight alterations to the principal Act—for the express purpose of giving the Minister power to decide questions when they are referred to him. At the present time some doubt exists as to who should be the arbitrator, and whether the arbitration is valid or not. During the coming year we expect one or two new roads board districts to be formed. There is also an application in regard to the alteration of some of the wards, and a difference of opinion already exists in regard to the allocation of funds and loan moneys which have been raised in new districts. These clauses are put in at the express desire of the Crown Law Department, owing to the doubt which now exists in regard to the settlement of the questions I have just referred to. The Bill is only being introduced in order to re-enact the Roads Act until 1916. I think I have given hon. members a fairly clear idea of the principles of this small measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [11.11]: I have gone carefully into this Bill and compared it with the principal Act. It is purely a machinery measure which is to provide for the procedure to be adopted in the case of the union of certain districts, or subdivisions of certain districts. From my knowledge of the

Act I cannot see that there is anything in the Bill that is likely to cause any discussion, and I am prepared to let it pass the second reading. I am quite sure that hon. members, if they go through the Bill carefully, will find there is nothing in it that they can object to.

The Minister for Works: I promised the leader of the Opposition I would not pass the second reading of the Bill tonight. I trust someone will move the adjournment of the debate.

On motion by Mr. Robinson debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.13 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 7th September, 1915.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE, RETIREMENT OF C. F. GALE.

Attendance of Member of Assembly.

On motion by Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) ordered: "That a Message be sent to the Legislative Assembly asking that House to authorise the Hon. R. H. Underwood to attend and give evidence before the select committee on the retirement of Mr. C. F. Gale."

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Report of the Senate of the University of Western Australia for year ending 31st December, 1914. 2, Municipal Corporations Act, 1906.—By-laws Nos. 3 and 31 of the municipality of Perth. 3, Plant Diseases Act, 1914.—Regulations. 4, Abattoirs Act, 1909.—Regulations. 5, Roads Act, 1911—(a) Cue-Day Dawn Road Board.—By-laws. (b) Darling Range Road Board.—By-laws *re* special roll for loan poll. 6, Mines Department, report for year 1914. 7, Public Service Commissioner, report for year ended 30th June, 1915. 8, State hotels, profit and loss account and balance sheet to 30th June, 1913, with Auditor General's report. 9, Return of receipts and expenditure, etc., in connection with State batteries in the mining industry (asked for by Hon. R. G. Ardagh). 10, Newcastle-Bolgart railway extension, map of.

OBITUARY—HON. D. G. GAWLER,
LETTER IN REPLY.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following letter:—

The Hon. the President, Dear sir,—
On behalf of myself and my children I wish to thank you and the Colonial Secretary and members of the Legislative Council for the kind resolution of sympathy and condolence in our great loss and sorrow. Believe me, Yours sincerely, May Gawler. Cottesloe, 23rd August, 1915.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE,
HORSE-RACING CONTROL.*Extension of Time.*

On motion by Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH the time for bringing up the report of this committee was extended for a fortnight.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE,
MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.*Extension of Time.*

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY the time for bringing up the report of this committee was extended for one fortnight.

QUESTION — PARLIAMENTARY
ALLOWANCES AND VOLUNTARY
DEDUCTION.

Hon. C. SOMMERS asked the Colonial Secretary: Is the voluntary deduction of 7.89 per cent. of their salaries made by members of both Houses universal? If not, how many members have refused to make such deduction?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: No. One member of the Legislative Assembly refused to agree to the reduction; three failed to reply to the Deputy Premier's circular, and eight others gave authorities for reduction for a stated period, which has now expired. Two members of this House failed to reply to the circular, and in the cases of three other members of this Chamber the authorities for reduction have either expired or been withdrawn.

QUESTION — VOTERS AND PAY-
MENT OF INCOME TAX.

Hon. F. CONNOR (for Sir E. H. Wittenoom) asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What is the number of voters entitled to vote for the Legislative Assembly? 2, How many of such voters are exempt from payment of income tax owing to the amount of their annual income being under £200? 3, Alternatively how many of such voters paid income tax?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, 190,025. 2, Approximately the number remaining after deducting 14,395 from 190,025. 3, Approximately 12,313. It should be explained that 2,082 of the 14,395 exempted (*vide* No. 2) are rendered exempt from income tax by the further deductions allowed by the Act, such as £10 per child under 16, life assurance premiums, and the abatement under Section 17 where the income is derived from taxable land.

QUESTION — STEAMSHIP "WEST-
ERN AUSTRALIA."

Hon. W. KINGSMILL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Have the Government sold the s.s. "Western Australia" or are

negotiations in hand to that end? If so, will she be sold by public tender? 2, Is it the intention of the Government to purchase a steamship to replace the "Western Australia"? Are negotiations proceeding for that purpose? 3, If so, in view of the critical state of the finances will the Government seek the approval of Parliament before concluding such purchase? 4, In any case, will the Government conduct such negotiations by a system of public tender?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The "Western Australia" has not been sold, but she has been placed with a firm of ship-brokers for the purpose of sale. Public tenders will not be called, as it is not customary in the shipping business to dispose of boats by that method except for breaking up, and the Government is satisfied that the firm of brokers employed is in touch with likely buyers of a steamer suitable only for special work. A reserve has, however, been fixed. 2, The Government is considering the question of placing an order for the building of a ship to replace the "Western Australia," and at the same time convey chilled meat from Wyndham to Fremantle; but has been advised that even if the orders were given now it would be impossible to complete same earlier than within twelve months after the end of the war. In view of this and the necessity for making provision for dealing with the product of the Wyndham meat works, the Government have taken advantage of an opportunity which offered to secure a twin-screw Diesel engined steamer, on the report of Sir John Biles, the eminent naval architect. Until the works are finished, the vessel will engage in the carriage of Western Australian produce to London, returning with Government material and general cargo. She will then be insulated to carry chilled meat to Fremantle; and afterwards, when another ship (which will be absolutely necessary) has been built to take her place on the Wyndham run, she will be utilised for the carriage of frozen meat from Wyndham to London. 3, The Government realises the

critical state of the finances, and has effected the purchase by means which will obviate any drain on the monetary resources of the State at a period when it is necessary to conserve the public funds. The Government will promptly lay all papers relative to the purchase before Parliament, and feels convinced that when the facts are known and the pressing need for the ship recognised, its action will be endorsed. Parliamentary authority will be asked to build another ship for the purpose already set forth. In connection with this latter project, Sir John Biles has intimated that, as it is impossible at this time to anticipate what the cost of such a vessel would be, the proper course is to build on the basis of prime cost with a percentage for charges, and obtain tenders from reputable ship-builders on such a basis. 4, Answered by Nos. 2 and 3.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Enemy Contracts Annulment.

2, Bread Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.44] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend the Government Electric Works Act Amendment Act which was passed last session. With one exception the amendments have no effect on the general scope of the Act. The main amendment is that proposed to be made to Section 5 of the Act under which the Commissioner is empowered to establish and maintain electric works subject to the consent of any local authority in any area in which the works are to be operated. It is in respect of this proviso that an amendment is sought by striking out certain words which give local authorities unlimited powers of

prohibition within their area and inserting the following—

Provided also that the Commissioner shall not sell or supply electricity within the district of a local authority otherwise than to a State department or agency (State or Commonwealth) without the consent of the local authority, if such local authority has established electric works within its district prior to the establishment or construction by the Commissioner of electric works within the same district.

Those words now sought to be struck out were inserted in this House and they have had a wider effect than probably was anticipated. The Act as passed has hindered the Government to such an extent that if it were desired to supply a Government department in the metropolitan area, outside the municipality of Perth, and a local authority, between the point of supply and the point to which the current was to be taken, objected to the passage of the current through its area, that local authority could prevent the Government supplying the department as desired. The Government naturally objects to the local authorities having power to prevent it from supplying its own departments, no matter where they may be situated, in the metropolitan area. The object of erecting a large power house was to supply the needs of the whole metropolitan area, and we want to supply the wants of Government departments all over that area. More than that, however, the Claremont council also objected to the current being taken through its municipality, although we do not propose to supply anyone in Claremont. The railway line is intersected by a street, and we cannot cross the street either above it or under it, with our cable, although we desire to supply North Fremantle with current at their own request. This indicates what unfair and unreasonable advantage is being taken of the present Act. The Government is not desirous of using the current to oust any municipality from generating or supplying current on its own account. We do not desire to enter into competition in

any way, in fact, it is desired that the local authorities shall act as retailers of the current. The Government holds, however, that where it is desired to supply Government departments or agencies the local authorities should not have power to withhold their consent, and it is to prevent this that the present Bill is designed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [4.50]: I am rather surprised at the very poor case made out by the leader of the House in support of a measure which has such far-reaching effects. The only argument used by the leader of the House is that Claremont objected to the mains going through their municipality to supply the North Fremantle municipality. As a member of the Fremantle Tramways Board, I know that the North Fremantle Municipal Council have an agreement with the Fremantle Tramways Board for a term of 4½ years from date, so that I am at a loss to understand why the Government desire to incur any additional expense in the way of transmitting this current to North Fremantle, when they cannot possibly enter into an agreement with them for a term of 4½ years. The Bill has very far-reaching effects indeed from a local governing standpoint. I desire to point out that when in 1913 the original Act was introduced in another place, it was presented for a specific purpose. It was then stated by the Premier when introducing it, that it was necessary, as the Government had nationalised the tramways, that a power house should be installed in order to meet the increased requirements of the system, and in view of the Perth City Council also having absorbed the rights of the Perth Gas Co., it was essential they should have some extension of their borrowing powers, so that they might instal another power house in order to cope with the additional requirements. The argument was advanced in the Legislative Assembly that, by the installation of the one power house, a considerable saving

would be effected to the ratepayers of Perth as well as to the taxpayers of the Government. It was pointed out in the debate that followed, that to erect two power houses would involve an expenditure of £280,000—that of the Perth City Council would cost £130,000, and that of the Government £150,000—and that two separate and distinct systems would be installed. One system, it was pointed out, could be installed at a considerable saving to all concerned. Last week I asked certain questions in this House in regard to the cost of the present installation, and the reply I received was that it was estimated that the present installation would cost £295,000. So that, instead of there being a saving of £40,000 or £50,000, by the installation of one power house to serve the metropolitan area, the figures which were given to me in reply to my questions show that the estimated cost will amount to £295,000, clearly indicating that the object in connection with the ratification of this agreement has not been carried into effect by the installation of the present system. The Premier also said it would be unwise for the Government to run mains along one side of the street and to have the mains of the Perth City Council on the other side of the street. The House was particularly anxious that no injustice should be done to any section of the community, and it was said that in conserving the interests of the Perth City Council within a radius of five miles, the other local governing bodies outside that limit would not be interfered with, and that, moreover, they were protected by the existing Act. We know very well that ever since responsible Government, or ever since the formation of municipalities, they have enjoyed the privilege of retaining the lighting if they so desired. The Fremantle municipality tried for some considerable time by concessions, to get their municipality lighted by electricity. They were unable, by offering concessions, to have anything brought about which would improve the municipality. The result was that the council embarked on a scheme in order to do their own lighting, and they installed

their own power house with the object of doing their own operating. A Bill was submitted in 1913, and after it was introduced, it was quite evident that the Government anticipated something that the House had never previously been told anything at all about. It was evident, after the introduction of the Bill, that they found themselves in the position of having to face additional heavy cost in connection with their own power house. Naturally they looked around for a greater number of consumers in order to reduce their standard charges. At the beginning of this year an amendment of the original Act was introduced. I pointed out that if that amendment was carried, it would have the effect of taking away the rights of the local governing bodies. Members will remember that when I spoke on the second reading of a Bill of an exactly similar nature to the present one, the Honorary Minister said "I do not think the construction placed upon this clause is exactly correct, but in order to make sure of my position I will ask that progress be reported, and will reply to the statement made by Mr. Lynn." What do we find? That the Bill was introduced, and the phraseology of the clause was such as to give the Commissioner power to do anything in opposition to any existing scheme in any other municipality. We adopted that Bill in this House, and when this was pointed out, it was recognised that the interests of the municipalities must be protected. The Honorary Minister never even called for a division when I moved an amendment to insert those words. What has taken place since then? Nothing that I know of, other than the anxiety of the people controlling this power house to rob other municipalities of the load they carry in order to reduce their standard charges in connection with this scheme. Last week I asked the Colonial Secretary one or two questions. One was as to the cost of the new power house, and the answer was, £295,000. I also asked what was the estimated number of units to be supplied per annum to (a) the Perth City Council, and (b) the Perth Tramways, and the reply was, 7,300,000

units. The power house was originally installed to supply these two distinct consumers, the Perth City Council undertaking that they would only charge 100 per cent. in excess of the price charged by the Government to the Government institutions. But the Perth City Council find themselves to-day in very much the same position as the Government do. The capital charges in connection with this scheme will not allow the Government to sell current at .75 unless they are in the position of getting a great many more consumers than they have at the present time. Ten per cent. for interest, sinking fund, obsolescence and depreciation is not one per cent. too much to add to any power house plant, and I speak as one having been associated with an electric lighting scheme for the past eleven years the depreciation of which has been considered from a commercial aspect. When I say that 10 per cent. per annum is not too much to ask any system to allow, I am speaking with some authority. If we take 7,300,000 units and the capital standing charges alone amounting to £300,000, it will be seen that the standing charges will come to 1d. a unit, so that even assuming they have their fuel thrown in—I know they have automatic stokers but even if the fuel cost nothing—their standing charges alone would exceed the rate they have quoted the Perth City Council. The Government have protected the other local governing authorities within the five miles radius to this extent that they allow the Perth City Council to add standing charges to the amount of £600,000 on top of their own £300,000 so that the other local governing bodies within the five miles limit will have to pay the interest, sinking fund and depreciation on the Perth City Council's scheme as well. Last week the South Perth council, anxious to enter into an agreement with the Perth City Council, had to agree to pay 3½d. per unit whereas the Cottesloe municipality and the North Fremantle municipality pay the Fremantle Tramway Board an average of 1.97d., so that a great difference exists between the cost to the municipalities adjoining Fremantle

as against that which will be necessary within the five miles radius of Perth. I have no desire to impute any motives. I am sorry that I have had to suggest some motive for the Government in wanting to go through these municipalities. I asked the Colonial Secretary if the Government had entered into any arrangement or agreement with the Naval Base to supply current. The reply was "No," and I believe the Colonial Secretary thought such was really the case. However, the mayor of Fremantle has placed in my hands a copy of a telegram sent on the 7th of last month to Mr. Burchell, Federal member for Fremantle, as follows:—

We learn Naval Base wants electricity; please see Minister and insist that Fremantle is asked to quote for supply of same.

Mr. Burchell wired in reply—

Reference electric agreement Naval Base Minister had completed an arrangement with State Government to supply 1d. per unit before receipt your wire. Regret but cannot secure review of matter now.

If the Government have entered into this agreement as stated by the Federal member for Fremantle, I should like to know whether they have done so legally. If it has been legally done why the necessity for this Bill to enable the Government to run their cables through Claremont and Fremantle? If the Government have this power, the Bill is not necessary. If they have not the power, is the telegram wrong or is it the intention of the Government to bludgeon this thing through irrespective of the consequences to any of the local governing bodies? As regards the supply to the Naval Base, the sum of 1d. per unit has been quoted in order to secure an additional supply to reduce the standing charges on the total units generated by the Government. I believe this is the reason why the Government are so anxious to secure the passage of this Bill. However, this phase of the question was considered by the House in the early part of this year and, if it be that the Government find themselves in the position of being faced with a loss similar to that

incurred on many of their undertakings, they are to be complimented on looking out for additional consumers though not complimented if they propose to confiscate the rights of local governing bodies. I have a mass of figures relating to capital expenditure, loss in transmission, and many other aspects of the net cost of generating electricity, but I have no desire to weary the House by quoting them. All I can say is they have been compiled by an eminent engineer of the City, and he points out the impossibility of the Government supplying under existing conditions at the rate they have quoted. We have been told in another place that it will be to the advantage of Fremantle to take current from the Government. Will it be to the advantage of Fremantle to take current from the Government when the periodicity is different from that in existence at Fremantle? Will it be profitable to scrap plant of which Fremantle has had 10 years' experience at a very low generating cost and one equal to what the Government supply would cost if standing charges were added? Will it be profitable to discard that plant and take current from Perth which will mean an alteration in the whole of the system at Fremantle? I am perfectly well aware many engineers contend that the alteration of this periodicity is not as serious as some people believe it is, but why should we, being satisfied with our local scheme, risk the experiment of taking our supply from the Government? This question has been considered by the Fremantle Council and they have decided that in the interests of the municipality they have no desire to enter into the Government scheme and they ask this House to protect the interests of the local governing body which installed a system at a time when they had a right, by Act of Parliament, to do so. When the system was installed at Fremantle—and I mention Fremantle specially because it is the province I represent—it was at a time when the Government had a little installation of their own. That plant was not sufficient to supply the requirements of the Government in those days and the Fremantle Council in-

stalled a system sufficiently large to supply their own and the Government's requirements. From that day to the present, the Fremantle system has been supplying all the various Government departments there. It might be argued that the Government have a perfect right to supply their own departments. If the Government have a right to go into Fremantle after the local council have installed a system that cost £150,000, after they have pioneered the district by that installation and after they have to some extent stemmed the evil days that were on Fremantle when people were leaving the town on account of the lack of transit and lighting facilities and when the property of the town was pledged to the extent of £150,000—

Hon. A. Sanderson: When was that?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: In 1903. Having stemmed that tide and having accomplished so much, the Fremantle Council have a right to ask that the larger governing body, namely the State, be not allowed to enter into competition with them. I can understand the brevity of the remarks of the Colonial Secretary in moving the second reading of the Bill. He is naturally awaiting an opportunity to rebut some of the statements which will be made in criticism of this measure. I do not know that this is altogether fair but perhaps it is pardonable in the circumstances. If we were told that the Fremantle Tramway Board were doing something in opposition to the best interests of the adjoining municipalities, or were attempting in any direction to use their scheme as a monopoly to force up the price of current to an undue extent and, in face of that, sought protection in the direction of refusing authority to supply adjoining municipalities from the Government scheme, the House would have a right to refuse to grant any protection at all, but when the Fremantle Board are selling their current at an average of 1.97d. to adjoining municipalities, and when I state that the Perth City Council is not in a position to supply current at anything like that cost and that therefore the bodies adjoining Fremantle have a great advantage over the local au-

thorities within the five-mile radius of Perth, a statement borne out by the fact that only last week the Perth City Council stipulated 3½d. per unit for an agreement to be entered into with the South Perth Council, we are entitled to the protection of this House. The Fremantle scheme has been a success. During its 10 years of operation there has been a surplus of approximately £110,000; it has paid in interest approximately £50,000, and has set aside a sum of £60,000 against depreciation, sinking fund and obsolescence. In view of the proved successful operation of the scheme—the first municipal system of its kind installed in Australasia—is it right that the Government should enter that municipality and compete against its scheme?

Hon. J. F. Cullen: What is the charge the Government propose?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: As low as 1¼d. A point I also desire to stress is that of the comparison between this municipalised scheme and some of the Government undertakings. Surely we do not propose to prejudice the success of such a scheme in the interests of an undertaking commenced by the Government. I do not know whether it is correct but I understand that the very foundations of the system in Perth will cost more than the generating plant in Fremantle. The interest and sinking fund will amount to a sum equal to the total of the generating plant at Fremantle station. Then we are told that this current can be supplied at a less cost. One objection I have is that the municipality of Fremantle should reap some benefit from any Government institution for its lighting in its own locality. In Fremantle to-day we have Government buildings facing a frontage of three miles; we also have Government property, the capital value of which amounts to £726,000. If that were rated on a property basis, it would mean £29,000 per annum in rates; if it were rated on the rateable value on the same basis as the rate at present in existence in Fremantle, it would yield a revenue of £5,600. There was a time in the history of this State when the Government could say "Yes; but we subsidise the municip-

ality, why should we pay rates?" The municipality of Fremantle received last year less than £1,000 in subsidy from the Government, and since June last, the beginning of the present financial year, those subsidies have been falling off. Yet in view of that, the Government say "We have a perfect right to sell current within your boundary direct, and though we refuse to pay rates, we can refuse you permission to get any direct benefit for the lighting of any property we have in your locality." There is one serious aspect which this Bill will have in its results on the municipality. Considering the amount of money we have borrowed in connection with the scheme, if we are to have competition from the Government, if the Government are to have a free license to come into the municipality and do anything they like in this direction, naturally a very heavy depreciation must set in. I am quite aware that the same argument will be used as was used when the Government came in and nationalised the Perth city tramways. It was then said they were taking away the rights of the Perth City Council, and at the same time refused them the right to purchase. Put Fremantle in an exactly similar position. If the Government must have the right to supply in order to generate at a profit, let them come down to Fremantle and buy out the Fremantle system. The Colonial Secretary smiles. I am reminded of the remarks made by Mr. Colebatch, when arguing strenuously against the nationalisation of the Perth trams—and I would like to remind the Colonial Secretary that we have no watered stock—

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: I told you then that they were robbing Perth, also that they were robbing Fremantle.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If the Government will come to Fremantle and say they will give the Fremantle people three per cent. on the gross receipts of the tramway system, and will pay on the same valuation at Fremantle as they paid for the Perth tramway system, then I am quite safe in saying that I would not oppose the purchase. So long as the taxpayers of Fremantle are not interfered with—and the

Fremantle system comprises the big bulk of the taxpayers—then no harm can be done; because we do not want the Government to shower on us all those wonderful schemes they have for the reduction of rates. We do not believe in them in Fremantle; we are prepared to go on as we have done in days gone by, and if the Government will simply leave us alone we shall be quite happy. There is another aspect of this question. Take the roads boards outside the five-mile radius. I have received a strong objection from the Fremantle Roads Board, who ask why the Government should come through their district. That is a right they have had preserved to them by Act of Parliament for many years; and they say "If the Government can come through our roads district and compete with us in any direction, it will, to a great extent, nullify the effect of any agreement we may be in a position to enter into with the tramway board or the Government." That position can be clearly shown. Take any one of the roads boards within the five-mile radius of the Perth City Council. They are not called upon to buy exclusively or direct from the Government. The Government refuses to sell to them direct. They say, "We shall supply you through the Perth City Council, and you will be asked, first of all, to pay standing charges on an approximate amount of money before you can get a supply." Outside the five-mile radius we have to protect ourselves. I hope this House will refuse to sanction this Bill. There has been no argument brought forward to justify its passing. It is the same measure as was introduced in this House in the early part of this year.

The Colonial Secretary: Exactly?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Its result will be exactly the same. My objection is that the Government should not have the right to come into any municipality without the sanction of the local authority. That was the amendment I moved in this House in the early part of the year: that amendment was acceptable to this House, and now the Government are endeavouring to get this amending Bill through, in order to defeat what was accomplished

here in the early part of the year. I cannot understand why some of our high officials of State should be so anxious to confiscate the interests of Fremantle. Riding on a tram car one meets one or two of these high-placed officials, and if one has anything to say in connection with the scheme they become excited and want to know why the State should not have the right to do this. I think I know why. The reason is that the Government's scheme has been so loaded that it will be impossible for them to show any profit at the rate they are quoting. But take the Subiaco council, coming within the five-mile radius, or the Claremont council. Is it a fair thing that those local governing bodies, Claremont and Subiaco, should pay the standing charges of £600,000 on the Perth scheme?

Hon. J. Duffell: It does not affect them.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Why? Can the Subiaco council buy outside of the Perth scheme?

Hon. J. Duffell: They can generate for themselves.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Yes; every municipality has that right. No Act can destroy it. My point is that a small plant like Subiaco can generate current at a cheaper rate than the Government scheme.

Hon. J. Cornell: They can generate cheaper at Kalgoorlie than at Subiaco.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If the Government have loaded this scheme £300,000 for standing charges, capital expenses, and if there has to be added £600,000 for the Perth City Council scheme, what benefit is it, even to those adjoining municipalities within the five-mile radius. Absolutely none. I am prepared to submit that the people of Fremantle have no right to object if the Government desire to supply North Fremantle, Cottesloe, or any other local governing body outside our boundaries. But if the Government can go to North Fremantle and supply at 1d., or to the Naval Base and supply at 1d.—which, according to this wire, they have evidently done—and they cannot supply South Perth, which is closer, for less than 3½d., that is a clear indication that this Bill was introduced for the specific purpose of amalgamating the two

systems and supplying the Perth tramways and the Perth City Council. We have no right in this House to allow this Bill to pass, in view of the capital expenses. It will be of no benefit to Fremantle. We do not desire at the present time to take current from the Government and I think the House will agree that after 10 years of successful operation, it would be unwise on the part of the people of Fremantle to entertain taking current from Perth, from a system of a different type and altogether different from the one they are now using. I propose to ask the House, in Committee, to delete that proviso.

The Colonial Secretary interjected.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If there be any administrative clause in the Bill which the Minister desires specially to see passed, I have no objection, but if the Minister considers that if this proviso be deleted the Bill is of no use to him, I am prepared to move for the rejection of the measure. I thought perhaps, however, that one or two of the small clauses might be to some effect, and I have no desire to hamper the Minister in that direction.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.29]: I do not propose to take up much of the time of the House in the discussion of this Bill, and shall address myself chiefly to the remarks made by hon. members on this question, so far as it affects local governing bodies in my district. I do not think this amendment is going to affect us in any material way. It was distinctly laid down and inserted in the original Act, and it was I who signed the agreement which set out specifically that a local governing body within the five-mile radius would not be rated. I see nothing in this amending Bill to disturb that arrangement. If I read the Bill rightly, it simply asks for permission to lay a cable through any of the districts which at the present time have their own electric lighting plants. That being so, I as the representative of one of the local governing bodies concerned, which body is within my electorate, have not received from that body anything in the nature of objection to the

Bill. I do not quite know how to regard the telegram read by an hon. member as emanating from the representative of Fremantle in the Federal House of Representatives. That message states that an agreement has already been entered into with the State Government. Against this, we have the assurance of the leader of this House that no agreement has been made. Still, in the event of an agreement having been concluded for the supply by the Western Australian Government of current to the Naval Base at 1d. per unit, I do not consider it justifiable to assume that the Government would be losing money thereby, simply because the Fremantle council cannot sell current at a lower rate than 1½d. We have to take into consideration the fact that the Government have provided means for generating a greater amount of current than they can see their way to dispose of at the present time. It is with the object of bringing into being industries such as will be required in connection with the Naval Base, that the Government wish to avail themselves of this opportunity, even if they have to supply current at 1d. per unit. It may be urged that Subiaco at the present time cannot be supplied by the Government, but if the City of Perth could supply Subiaco at a lesser cost than that at which the municipality can generate, I have no hesitation in saying that Subiaco would readily agree to purchase its power from Perth. The principal Act, however, contains a provision that interest and sinking fund must be added to the original cost to the Government, .75d., which additions would pretty well raise the cost to 2d. per unit. In that way Subiaco would be unable to take current from Perth. The fact remains, however, that the Government have installed a large plant, and therefore can generate more current than is at present required. I do not think it would be good policy on the part of this House to throw any obstacle in the Government's way.

Member: They will crush other bodies.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I do not think so. I do not believe the Government

would crush Fremantle even if Fremantle supplied current to the Naval Base. Besides, we have to consider the northern suburbs. If the Government can supply current at the price which has been quoted, why should we stand in the way of allowing them the necessary privilege, which I contend they have not at the present time, of running their main cable through the various municipalities? It must be understood that there is no intention of tapping that main cable within the boundaries of such municipalities and competing against any local governing body already in possession of a generating station. The idea underlying this measure is a new one—one which has arisen since the Act of 1913 was passed. One purpose is to supply current to the Naval Base.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: The Government say they are not going to supply current to the Naval Base.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The Government say the opposite, and they are justified in so supplying. As I previously pointed out, we have to bear in mind that the machinery installed by the Government is capable of generating current considerably in excess of the present demands. I may put it that the Government are looking half an inch before their nose. The machinery is there, the current is generated, and the Government have to find an outlet for that current. If the current is sold to the Naval Base at 1d. per unit, that does not imply that there will be any loss. The current representing a surplus which would otherwise not be turned into cash, the Government can afford to sell it at 1d.; and thereby they will bring down the higher rate of cost which would be incurred but for this outlet. Otherwise they really would not be able to supply municipalities at the price which was agreed upon originally, and which was based upon the figures furnished by Messrs. Merz and McLellan when that firm entered into a contract to instal the machinery. We must not lose sight of the fact that since the principal Act was placed on the statute-book a great many changes have taken place. The war in

Europe has brought about such a chaotic state of affairs that the cost of the machinery installed in the power house is considerably higher than anticipated.

Member: On whose authority do you make that statement?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: On the authority of the facts before us. On the authority of the contractor, if the hon. member likes. The fact remains that the cost of the machinery has been considerably higher than the tender price, by reason of the outbreak of war.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: That is the contractor's loss.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: No, because *force majeure* intervened between the contractor and the Government of the country which was to manufacture the machinery, Germany. The fact remains that the contractor had to go further afield or look to other sources for the supply of machinery. I say that without fear of contradiction.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Were the contractors German.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: No, but the machinery was being manufactured in Germany. It was generally acknowledged, up to the time the war broke out, that the machinery manufactured in Germany was second to none made in any part of the world. That was acknowledged by the trade.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: How were tenders called?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I am not going to enter into that argument at all. What applied to contracts in other directions applied also to the contract for that machinery. Hon. members know that the works were held up for a long time, pending the contractors' getting on the track of machinery similar to that which they had undertaken to supply. They did eventually get the machinery required.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did they get it through America?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Hon. members can find that out for themselves. The higher cost of the machinery accounts for the difference between the amount of the original contract and what the cost has turned

out to be. I ask in the name of common sense, would hon. members have the Government hang up the whole of that plant, stop the progress being made with the erection of sub-stations and so forth, until the war is ended, rather than pay the extra cost of the machinery? I contend that the amendments proposed by this Bill will not affect local governing bodies one jot or tittle. Neither Claremont nor Subiaco has said anything in opposition to the Bill. In the circumstances, having no instructions from those I have the honour to represent here, I do not intend to throw any obstacle in the way of the passage of this amending Bill. On the other hand, I trust the time is not far distant when this scheme will be completed, when we shall have an improved system of running the Perth trams, and when the City of Perth will be in a position to supply current at a lower price than the present; which will all go towards hastening the dawn of the millenium.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [5.42]: It seems to me that the Government at the present time on this question are in very much the same position as they have been in with regard to a great many other matters into which they have entered. We all know that once a mistake is made it frequently happens that a great number of follies have to be committed in order to overcome the difficulties arising from the initial error. In saying this, I am perhaps disagreeing somewhat with Mr. Lynn. The experience of Fremantle, where we have our own tramway system, has shown us—and more particularly today, since we have had the opportunity of comparing the tram service in Fremantle with that in Perth—that municipalities, when they put their shoulder to the wheel, can manage their own affairs better than these can be managed by the present Government. In acquiring the Perth tramway system, instead of allowing the municipality to acquire it, the Government made that initial mistake which has led to all the difficulties in which they are now plunged. When the power house scheme was first reported upon, it was intended, as may be gathered

from the Premier's remarks on the measure in another place, to put down a plant for the purpose of supplying current for tramway requirements, for lighting and supplying power to the City of Perth, and possibly for electrifying the railways between Northam and Fremantle. That was the reason for erecting the power house. That was why the Government were to enter into another State enterprise in generating and supplying current. It is because the Government are in this measure endeavouring to go beyond what they originally set out to do, that I am opposing the Bill. Mr. Lynn has already pointed out to the House the success which has attended the Fremantle scheme during the ten years of its existence, and it is not necessary for me to stress that point. There are, however, one or two aspects of it which I should like the House to take into consideration. One is that after running ten years the Fremantle scheme has not cost the Fremantle ratepayers one shilling. The whole of the expense connected with it, including all the profits, have, as Mr. Lynn has pointed out, been paid by the consumers of current and by the users of the trams. The latter come from all parts of the State, or I might say from all parts of the world. Thus the system has not cost Fremantle one shilling in rates. We look with pride to that fact, and feel that a scheme which has produced such results is worthy of consideration. In dealing with a measure of this description, affecting Fremantle as this Bill will do if it passes, it is necessary to become to a certain extent parochial. And, therefore, it is necessary for us to stress the advantages which the people of Fremantle derive from controlling their own affairs rather than allowing them to become controlled by the Government. We supply light at 6d. a unit to all consumers. We have done that from the inception of the scheme. It is being done more cheaply than Kalgoorlie and Boulder can do it, because they have had to increase their rate from 6d. to 7d. on account of the advent of metallic filament lamps which require consider-

ably less current to give the same light. They have found it necessary to make up the difference in the rate. But the Fremantle people have received from the tramway board the benefit of the increased lighting and the cheaper lighting by means of the metallic filament lamps without any increase of price having been imposed upon them. Another thing in which Fremantle compares favourably with Perth is this: We are supplying our householders at a minimum cost of 1s. 6d. a month as against Perth, where the minimum is 3s. There, again, we prove that the Fremantle people, by managing their own concern in their own way, have been able to do better than Perth. We have the best tramway system in Australia. We give a time-table of our tramway service, one that can be relied upon. It is possibly not quite as reliable as that of the metropolitan railway system, or even that of the Great Southern, referred to by Mr. Cullen; but, just the same, it is reliable, and the people of Fremantle have little to complain about in that direction. Every part of Fremantle has a tram service at 15 minutes interval. That is more than can be said for Perth, for some of Perth's suburbs, as large almost as Fremantle, get a service of only half an hour at certain times of the day. There is no portion of Fremantle where the service is less frequent than 15 minutes, and at certain times of the day it is accelerated to three or four minutes. The fares charged on the Fremantle trams are the cheapest in Australia. We give the people a ride of eight miles for 3d. There is no other place in Australia where this is done, and, it must be remarked, we do it without loss to the scheme. I am stressing these points for the reason that in another place, in discussing this measure, there was apparently some misconception in regard to the Fremantle scheme. They dealt with our tramways as if they were a separate scheme from our lighting. The tramways and the lighting are but one scheme. The current is generated in the one power house,

and the whole is controlled by one board. The one cannot be separated from the other. The whole scheme embraces the lighting and the trams, and consequently anything affecting the Fremantle scheme affects the scheme as a whole. It has been said in another place that the Fremantle people did not take the Government's offer into consideration, that they did not accept seriously the question of taking the current from Perth, and that they arrived at their conclusion without mature consideration. The Minister for Works said,

I have no desire to make allegations against the Fremantle Council, but will state this fact, that there was a conference between the tramway board and the two councils, and one councillor moved that the offer be not accepted.

If we are to condemn the whole town because one councillor did not maturely consider the question, I venture to say that the sense of justice of this House is absolutely lost. The fact that one member moved a resolution which was not even seconded by any other member of the conference shows that the conference had decided to take the matter into consideration, and were not going to be a party to the closing down of this question without mature consideration. As a matter of fact, the Fremantle Tramway Board had this question under discussion for over 12 months, and report after report was produced on the question, submitted to the councils, considered by the councils, and, at the end of that time, when several conferences had been held between the three bodies down there, the ultimate result was that the council decided that, in the interests of their own scheme, they had better retain the generating of their own electric current rather than take it from the Government. To show the House that they did consider it, I will suggest some of the reasons why they rejected the Government's offer to supply current.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: What was that offer?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: The offer from the Government was at .85d. per unit. That is on the Fremantle end of the line, where we would take it into our power house in bulk. We went into this matter thoroughly, and we found we could generate our own current at Fremantle at practically the same price as that at which we could buy it from the Government. The actual cost per unit which it would have meant to us, if we had taken it from the Government, was 2.504d.

The Colonial Secretary: You would not have to pay that for it.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: Let me explain. We were to receive the current from the Government at .85d.; but on top of that certain charges would have to be paid, owing to the necessity of our having to instal certain machinery for the utilisation of the current which we received from the Government; the sub-stations and the scrapping of numerous motors now engaged in generating current, and, of course, interest and sinking fund on this would have to be added to the cost of the current when purchased from the Government. This loads these units from .85d. to 2.504d. That would be the actual cost of the current when Fremantle would be able to retail it to customers. We ourselves can generate it, loaded up with the same charges, and can supply at the present time at 2.535d. per unit. So it will be seen that the difference between the two proposals is only .031d. per unit. That amount is so infinitesimal that the local governing bodies studied it very carefully before deciding whether they would accept the Government's offer. If we had resolved to take the current from the Government we would have been immediately under the necessity of supplying to our customers—who are at present under agreement with us—outside our own boundary, and the Government within our own boundary, at a cost of from 1½d. to 1¾d. Our net profits from these customers would have dropped from £2,000 odd per year to £560, or a loss of something like £1,500 a year. When we added that to the other consideration,

namely, that we were only going to lose by the actual generation a point of three-hundredths of a penny, it showed that the advantage lay in the retention of Fremantle's own power house and scheme. There were many other reasons. One was that if we took the current from the Government we should be practically dependent on a copper strand, running from East Perth to Fremantle, for the maintenance of our entire scheme. The current would have been brought down on a single line, and in the event of any accident happening to that line the result would have been an immediate paralysis of the whole of Fremantle's lighting power and trams until the line could be repaired. That was counted an important point by the Fremantle people; because at present any breakdown in our power house would mean only the breakdown of a portion of the scheme, the cutting out of a certain number of trams, or a certain number of lights, until repairs were effected. The whole scheme would not be paralysed as it would be by the breaking down of the line between Perth and Fremantle. It is a very important consideration, and, as I have already pointed out, the taking of the current from the Government would have broken our agreement with the local governing bodies. I am going to deal with that later on, but I would like to say here that the growth of our own scheme—even since the day when the manager for the tramway board placed his report before the board—has been considerable, and consequently our generating cost has gone down until at present, if the same comparison were made again between our generating cost and the cost of taking the current from the Government, the advantage would be found to be actually with our generating charges. Another reason why the offer from the Government was turned down was the objection of the Fremantle people to centralisation. This is interesting, because the present Government are supposed to be opposed to centralisation, are supposed to equitably distribute their favours if it can be done without loss to the State. But in this case the Government showed that they wished to conserve

everything within one section of the State to the detriment of outlying districts, and the people of Fremantle held that to be another reason why they should refuse to take the current from the Government. But the most important reason which actuated the people of Fremantle in turning down the offer was the periodicity of the current. This has been touched upon by Mr. Lynn, and I desire to touch upon it later on under another heading of my remarks. But undoubtedly this was the most important reason which actuated the Fremantle people in turning down the Government's proposal: It would have caused an enormous amount of money to be expended by the board in the replacement of motors and the complications that would certainly have ensued. Still another reason was the difficulty we had in pinning the Government down to a date upon which they would be able to supply us with current if we entered into an agreement. This might be of interest to Mr. Duffell. At the conference between the board and the Commissioner and the Premier we were told that the probability was that the Government would be in a position to supply us with current from East Perth at the 1st January of this year, but that they would guarantee to give us the current by the 1st March. We had a doubt about the ability of the Government to supply at that time, and subsequent events have shown that we were justified in that doubt; because if the Government had been in a position to supply us on the 1st January the whole of their machinery should have been, not in Germany being made, but on its way to Australia; because the time which would elapse between then and the time they were sure they could supply us with current would have been required for the erection of machinery here and the connecting up between Perth and Fremantle. If the Government at that time had not the machinery we were perfectly justified in turning down the offer for that reason. If they at that time had the machinery on the water for Australia, they were misleading the people by saying that the probability was they could supply by the 1st

January. Another reason, of course, was the desire for personal control of our own scheme. We have controlled it well in the past, and the people of Fremantle felt that unless it could be proved that some material advantage would be derived by their taking the current from Perth, they were fully justified in adhering to their own established scheme. The Premier has made the statement that the only ground upon which it was rejected was, that it affected the power house staff and would mean the throwing out of work of a number of men in the municipality. That was a paltry statement to emanate from the leader of the Government, and I am surprised that a statement of that nature should have been made in another place without refutation from the Minister for Works, who is thoroughly aware of the facts. I am astounded that a statement like that should have been made without being resented by the representative of the district, who is also a member of the Tramway Board itself. I think a statement like that, coming from a responsible gentleman like the Premier, is a slur upon the district, which should not for a moment be allowed to pass by a gentleman who was perfectly aware of the circumstances.

The Colonial Secretary: I think you are out of order.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I am only replying to a statement which has been made in another place. I do not think we should allow such statements to pass unchallenged, and we have no other opportunity except in this House. Unless Mr. President rules me out of order, I think I am entitled to proceed. It has been also strongly emphasised that the manager of the Fremantle scheme has said that he was prepared to recommend the taking of current from the Government. The manager of the Fremantle system never once officially recommended to the Fremantle Tramway Board that they should take current from the Government. His official report, or recommendation, was that it would pay the board better to retain their own scheme. The manager did, however, state at the conference that if the scheme

were his own he would consider the advisability of taking current from the Government, not from a business point of view but because he realised that if the Government came into the district to compete with us in our work of supplying current in our district they could sell under cost and so push us out of existence. The manager had a perfect right to make a statement of that nature, that no individual, no small body or company, could stand up in competition against the Government who have as capital the money of the taxpayer. The manager of the Fremantle Tramway scheme recognised this fact and said that in those circumstances it would be wise to take current from the Government; but his recommendation to the board was that we should retain our own power house and generate our own current. I propose now to deal with the question of the Perth power house plant. But, there is something in this connection of a highly technical nature and perhaps it may be slightly difficult for hon. members to follow me. I will, however, make it as clear as possible and try to put the matter in as popular a form I can so that members will understand what I am speaking of. The two gentlemen who advised the Government in regard to this scheme, Messrs. Merz and McLellan, had been in Melbourne advising the Victorian Government, and because they were in Australia, the Government of this State seized the opportunity of engaging them for the purpose of getting some advice as to the applicability of a scheme to Perth. I do not know what inquiries were made by the Government about the firm, as to whether they were capable of giving the information, qualified to give the necessary reports to the Government on this question, or not. But, I know this, that the advice given to the Government by those experts was not exactly what we should have desired. They have made mistakes in several directions in regard to various State enterprises, and consequently it is open to question whether they were qualified to give the report which the Government paid them for. I have a cer-

tain amount of information which goes to show that they were not. I give them the benefit of the doubt, and say that they were not qualified to give the information, otherwise I should be compelled to the view that they had some ulterior motive in advising the Government in the way they have. I prefer to put it in the way of saying that they had not the necessary knowledge. It is interesting to notice that Messrs. Merz and McLellan recommended machinery on what is known as the 40-cycle periodicity system. I may explain in regard to electric current that there are two well-known systems, one the direct current, which means that the pulsation is continuous in one direction, and the alternating current, in which the pulsations are backwards and forwards—the periodicity is alternative from the positive to the negative—and a 40-cycle periodicity means that there are 40 pulsations per second. It will help members to understand if they will bear that point in mind, that Messrs. Merz and McLellan recommended a 40-cycle periodicity to the Government, and that in doing so they recommended something entirely different from anything that was previously in this State. The whole of the motors will have to be either scrapped, sold or exchanged before consumers can receive current from the scheme. It will not be possible for the owner of any motor in the metropolitan area to use for the 40-cycle current any motor which is at present used for the 50-cycle current without its being reduced twenty per cent. in efficiency; or else the motors will have to be scrapped or sold and new motors installed in their places. The cost to the Government of altering their motors in connection with the work of the Fremantle harbour from 50-cycle to 40-cycle would be approximately £5,000. That much is admitted by their electrical engineer here. When it is recognised that to convert the motors of the Fremantle Harbour Trust will cost something like £5,000, what is going to be the cost of converting motors throughout the whole of the district in which the change has to be made? That, I think, shows that Merz

and McLellan, in recommending the 40 instead of the 50-cycle, have done something which the people of this State have to pay for to-day in the alteration of motors. But, it does not end with that. So long as the current is used in the district every consumer has to pay a higher price than would be necessary under the 50-cycle periodicity, because very few firms in the world manufacture machines on the 40-cycle periodicity. And there probably we have a reason why Messrs. Merz and McLellan recommended the scheme. Their report and recommendation was accepted by the Government without proper and careful consideration and a burden thus laid on the shoulders of the people of the State for all time. To show that I am not speaking without authority—I am not an electrical engineer but I have some knowledge of these matters—I will quote from the Engineering Standards Committee Report on British standards for electrical machinery—

The Standard frequency for alternating-current work, to be 50 periods per second. But where the circumstances of the case demand a lower frequency, a standard of 25 periods per second shall be adopted.

They recommended the 50-cycle system as the universal system throughout the United Kingdom. That report was issued in 1913. This authority is the highest in Great Britain on the question of periodicity. In England they have two standards of periodicity, 25 and 50. The 25 for railway transport motors. The reason for this lower periodicity is that the switches can be manipulated more easily than with the higher. In America they go further. They have 25 and 60 instead of 50. In this most modern and up-to-date scheme we are advised to have 40. The greatest engineering authority in America on this question says—this was written in 1911, long before Messrs. Merz and McLellan came here—

In England and on the continent, 50 cycles is standard frequency. This frequency still survives in this country in Southern California, where it was in-

troduced before 60 cycles was standard. The frequencies of 125 to 140 cycles, which were standard in the very early days, 20 years ago, have disappeared. The frequency of 40 cycles, which once was introduced as compromise between 60 and 25 cycles is rapidly disappearing, as it is somewhat low for general distribution, and higher than desirable for conversion to direct current. It was largely used also for power distribution in mills and factories as the lowest frequency at which arc and incandescent lighting is still feasible; for the reason that 40 cycle generators driven by slow speed reciprocating engines are more easily operated in parallel, due to the lower number of poles.

That is the opinion of an American engineer who is perhaps the highest engineering authority on schemes of this nature in America, a man who gets £10,000 a year from some big corporations there.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: Before tea I was referring to the question of periodicity, and I was stating that the introduction of a 40-cycle periodicity in lieu of a 50-cycle periodicity is something which would have a very material effect upon the economic side of this question. I pointed out that the electrical authorities of both England and America, which lead the electrical world, were in opposition to the installation of a 40-cycle system; and I have a table of a large number of the great electrical works in the United States which bears this out in actual practice. I find that out of 19 large concerns in the United States—and we must admit that the United States has shown the world a good deal in electrical matters—the periodicities adopted have been as follows: two of the 19 have 25-cycle periodicity; four have the 50-cycle periodicity, which is the English standard; one has 30-cycle; and 12 have 60-cycle periodicity. Not one of these great works has adopted the 40-cycle period-

icity. It seems strange indeed that we in Western Australia, in a small place like Perth, should have adopted something which the consensus of electrical opinion in the old world and in America condemns, rather than that we should fall into line with modern thought and modern ways and adopt something which would be for the best interests of all concerned. I have already pointed out that the cost of machinery under the 40-cycle periodicity would be greater than under the standard periodicity, and this should need no stressing on my part, because everyone knows that if he buys an article which is in universal use, it can be purchased cheaper than an article which is used only by people who have opinions outside the main current of thought, and who use something which is either a fad or else something which is obsolete. That which is universally used, on account of the greater quantity produced, must naturally be cheaper; and this applies to the whole of the machinery which we shall have to buy under the 40-cycle periodicity.

Hon. C. Sommers: Will not private people have to sell their existing plants?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: They will have to scrap them.

Hon. C. Sommers: At whose cost?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: That is a matter I am not conversant with, whether the Government or the local councils or the individuals will have to pay for that. It is a loss to the community, which will have to be borne by the public eventually.

Hon. C. Sommers: Could that have been obviated by adopting the 50-cycle?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: As far as Perth is concerned, in some cases no, because the direct current had been originally adopted. In districts where the alternating current is in existence—and there are a great number of such districts—the change from one cycle of periodicity to another cycle is going to lead to loss to every owner of a motor. That loss will not only be a present day loss, but one continuing

through all the years to come. Every person who purchases a motor or any gear to be used in connection with the 40-cycle system will have to pay more for the same power generated on his motor, and for machinery for that purpose, than he would have had to pay under the more popular and standard periodicity of 50-cycles. With either 50-cycle or 60-cycle, that is to say, either the English or the American standard, the cost of all machinery and gear would have been cheaper for all time than it will be under what is an obsolete periodicity. Another point in connection with Messrs. Merz and McLellan's recommendation to the Government, which is very significant, is this. After advising the Government of Western Australia on the scheme for the city of Perth, they were asked to furnish a recommendation for the city of London; and the recommendation which they made for the city of London was not a 40-cycle periodicity but a 50-cycle, such as Fremantle possesses to-day. I am willing to admit that possibly Perth is of more importance than London, and that possibly its requirements may be more advanced than those of London. That may perhaps account for the difference. But it is a most extraordinary thing that the same gentlemen who recommended the obsolete, out-of-date 40-cycle periodicity for Perth should have recommended the 50-cycle periodicity to the city of London within a few months of making the other recommendation to the Government here. From this I take it that there must have been some reason for the recommendation of a 40-cycle periodicity for Perth. I venture to think there must have been some interests involved of which we know nothing. That is the outcome of the hole-and-corner method of purchasing systems and materials adopted by the present Government. The people of this State will be called on to pay for this; not only now, but for many years to come. Even in connection with the erection of the power house the matter is open to comment. The power house is erected in a place which I venture to say

nine engineers out of ten would have condemned, and condemned for two reasons. The first reason relates to the foundations existing there. The swampy nature of the subsoil made it a very expensive proposition to put in the foundations; and not only that, but the result has been to give a foundation as to which we cannot be sure that it is going to be effective in the future. Nothing in the mechanical world requires such a solid, substantial, rigid foundation as an auto generator used in electrical works. Unless the foundation is absolutely rigid, the best results cannot be obtained. There will be undue wear and oscillation which will affect the work and lead to deterioration and loss. The erection of the power house in the place which has been selected represents a very serious mistake. Whether that be the fault of the Government or of the engineers, I do not know. A mistake has been made, however, in the two points, rigidity of foundation and extra cost of construction of the foundation. A further point is that the water supply obtainable where the works have been erected is not the best for the purpose. It is necessary that perfectly clean water should be used, or water as near to perfect purity as possible. I understand the works are erected in a swamp, where the water will be stagnant and probably full of weeds. The impurities in the water are going to be a source of expense to the Government for years to come. Lastly, as regards the building. I may be wrong in my statement here, but if I am wrong I can be corrected. I understand that the whole of the building, which is a steel structure, was imported into this State and then put together. I should like to know why the Government, who have erected a large implement and machinery works at Rocky Bay, did not utilise the works for the purpose of constructing this building rather than send the money out of the State to be spent elsewhere on work which could have been done more cheaply and as well here. These are all points in connection with the Government power house calling, in my opinion, for investigation. When I note all these things, it makes me view with a great

deal of suspicion anything which the Government attempt to do in connection with this generating plant. Another step which the Government propose to take is to supply municipalities outside the five-mile radius at an absolute loss. On the figures of the Government electrical engineer himself, figures given at the conference which I attended, it appears that the cost of current to the Government is 1.2305d. per unit. That is the actual cost to the Government of generating a unit of electricity at the works in East Perth. I will admit that cost carries standing charges, but who is to pay those standing charges? Are the taxpayers of this State as a whole to pay them, or are the people who use the current to pay them? If the people who use the current have not to pay the standing charges, then the people of this State generally have the right to object to the action of the Government in selling current at a price involving loss to the taxpayers as a whole. I will admit that where a private company are developing current for specific purposes and have a surplus, they are right in selling that surplus outside their own concern at the actual generating cost for the purpose of bringing down their own standing charges. But that argument does not apply in the case of a Government erecting works at the expense of the whole of the State, the cost of which works has to be borne by the whole of the State. There is no justification whatever for the Government's selling current to one section of the community at what represents an actual loss, and allowing the people as a whole to pay for the loss. However, this is on a par with the other contracts into which the Government have entered and which are alleged to be at a loss—contracts under which the Government are supposed to be selling under cost for the purpose of justifying them in embarking on undertakings which nobody ever asked them to embark on. I will now go back to the provisions of the Bill itself, and I should like to offer some reasons why this measure should not be placed on the statute-book. The Government claim the right in this Bill to enter into any district and supply both themselves and any

customers who may desire to take current from them. We know that no municipality could ever establish an electrical plant of their own if some outside body could at any time come along and pick the eyes out of that municipality—absorb the large customers in advance of the local people desiring to generate current themselves.

The Colonial Secretary: What customers could they supply under the Bill?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: The Naval Base, or, as said in another place, Mt. Lyell, or North Fremantle. If you take these big customers away you penalise the smaller people against ever getting any current for themselves. If the Government take the current to the Naval Base what will be the result to the settlers in that district? The Fremantle Tramway Board have received a resolution from the Fremantle roads board district giving them the sole right for a number of years to supply current in that district. If power is given the Government under the Bill to take current to the Naval Base it will do no good to the State, because the Government will have to sell to the Naval Base at a loss, or they will not get the contract, while it will badly affect the settlers in that district, because the Government, by their action, will absolutely debar the Fremantle Tramway Board from taking current into the district to those settlers, and the only chance the settlers have of getting the current from the Fremantle Tramway Board is as an adjunct to the Naval Base supply. While I am speaking of the Naval Base, I desire to say it has been stated that the Government were not using their influence in regard to securing a contract from the Naval Base. It was stated in another place that no influence was being brought to bear on the Federal authorities for the purpose of preventing the Fremantle Tramway Board from going into the district and supplying the Naval Base with electricity. As a matter of fact, just before Mr. Fanstone went to the East, he stated in the presence of three witnesses—I have no authority to give the names to the House, but if it were

desired I daresay I could get consent—that he had promised Mr. Scaddan that if he did not take electric current from the Government he would not take it from the Fremantle Tramway Board, but rather would generate it himself. The fact that the Naval Base authorities said they were willing to take current from the board at a farthing a unit more than the Government had offered it, shows the attitude of both parties. If the tramway board took the current from the Government they could charge the Naval Base up to $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per unit, and the Naval Base authorities told the Government that they were prepared to accept that price, but if the tramway board offered it at $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. when generated by themselves, the Naval Base authorities would not take it from the board, but would put down a plant and generate their own current. That shows, I think, there must have been influence brought to bear to prevent the Naval Base from taking the current from the Fremantle Tramway Board, and to induce them to give preference to the Government. While I am on the question of cost of current, I would like to point out to the Government, that although they are so solicitous to come to the aid of the smaller districts, and although they make a great song of their desire to enter into such districts with a view to enabling the people to get a cheap current, yet they are prepared to give the Fremantle Tramway Board current at .85d. and enter into an agreement with that board for 50 years, that within a five-mile radius of the Fremantle town hall they will not interfere with the board's operations, and the board can supply to the whole of that district at a price not exceeding $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. per unit and to the Government at $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. Yet the board are supplying the Government with current at $1\frac{1}{4}$ d., or a farthing less than they would have to collect from the Government if they took the bulk current from the Government. And the tramway board have offered to supply the Mt. Lyell works and the Naval Base and other parties with current at $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. Those other parties the Government are

prepared to hand over to the board if the board will take the current from the Government, and the board can charge anything up to $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. for the current. Is this the way to help the industries in those districts? Is this showing a consideration for the people settled in those districts? Are the Government honest in their statements, when they are prepared to hand over to the board the whole of that five-mile radius to be exploited for 50 years, at a return of $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. per unit, when the board to-day is offering to supply the same people at $1\frac{1}{4}$ d.? Are the Government honest in the statement that they are desirous of helping these people? Rather they are looking for a big consumer of current so that they can credit their scheme with a large income and show a profit on a concern which does not exist except on paper. The whole thing is too palpable, and I will leave hon. members to consider the matter for themselves. It has been stated also that the North Fremantle people have approached the Commissioner of Railways for the supply of current. The Government knew that the North Fremantle people had entered into an agreement with the Fremantle Tramway Board for the supply of current for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years, and that under these circumstances the North Fremantle people were not in a position to negotiate with the Government for the purchase of current without the consent of the Fremantle Tramway Board. It was stated that because the North Fremantle people had desired to do this and had approached the Government, the Fremantle council had put a clause into their agreement preventing them from doing this under a penalty of £1 per day. As a matter of fact that agreement was in existence long before the Government appeared as a competitor. It was binding on the North Fremantle people, as it was on the tramway board, and it was to the advantage of the people of North Fremantle to enter into that agreement, or they would not have done it. They were prepared to pay the price of the current, which is even now cheaper than Perth is supplying outlying districts at, and that clause was in the agreement, and was not

inserted as a penalty for taking a supply from the Government. It was stated that an agreement had been entered into by certain parties, who had not foreseen what was going to happen, and that therefore the Government would recommend them to break the agreement rather than abide by it, because it was no longer advantageous. Are we in a British country, or are we in Germany? The attitude of the Government appears to have been, "Why should we be bound by this scrap of paper? It stands between us and our object, therefore we must destroy it and let those suffer who will." It is also stated that the people of Cottesloe desired to purchase current from the Fremantle Tramway Board at $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit. It might be news to the Government to know that the manager of the tramways board had recommended the board to take into consideration the supplying of Cottesloe at less than the price the Government would have insisted upon our charging if we had entered into an agreement with the Government for the supply of bulk current. I am stressing these points to show that the Government, in endeavouring to induce the Fremantle Tramway Board to enter into a contract for the supply of current from the Government, were prepared to sell to the board the whole of that district to be exploited for the next 50 years, and thus to debar the residents from getting the cheaper current which the board were prepared to sell to them. If the Bill passes, the Government can go into the district of Fremantle, as they can go into any other district, and slaughter any attempt on the part of the people to supply themselves with cheap current, and can exploit them for all time. It is too late to protest against an action of any Government after the thing is effected. The time to protest is before it has been effected, and it is our duty, as representatives of the people, to see that the small bodies are protected against the depredations of this or any other Government, as contemplated by the Bill. I trust members will remember the arguments so often used in the past. During the years I have been a member of the House I have heard other members again

and again advocate private enterprise as opposed to socialistic enterprise. I have heard members on many occasions opposing attempts of the Government to undermine individual effort, and they have relied upon the sense of justice in the House to prevent the Government from doing anything of the sort. The proposal contained in the Bill is as much an attempt to interfere with the rights of the people as any other attempt to interfere with private enterprise. The Government, through this measure, desire to get the power to interfere with either existing or future concerns in the electric world in this area; and I look on the generating of electric current as being as much an industry as the making of bricks. The Government require a certain amount of current for themselves. They generate it by a plant largely in excess of their actual requirements, and so, finding themselves with a surplus of current, they are prepared to sacrifice any other enterprise which may exist now or in the future, for the purpose of proving that their own ideas are correct, that their own scheme is right. Rather should we remember that it is our duty, as representatives of the people, to protect the weak against the strong, to protect the small local governing bodies—which are as much, in their way, sovereign states as are the Government—just as much as we advocate the protection of our State Government's rights against possible encroachments of the Federal Government, and just as much as we attempt to protect the Federal Government against interference by the Imperial Government. The local governing bodies are as much entitled to their rights and privileges as are the central Government to theirs. It is not so much a question of the people supplying themselves with current or of the Government supplying them; it is a question rather of one section of the people interfering with another. The Government would be the first to cry out if the Federal Government exercised any powers which they may possess to run a railway line from our borders to Perth in opposition to our own, without consulting the State Government. So we, as

representatives of the local governing bodies, should see that the State Government do not step in and interfere with the inherent rights of local governing bodies, any more than we would allow the Federal Government to interfere with the rights and privileges of the State Government. I trust members will see that it is their clear duty to vote against this measure.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.59]: This Bill is of interest to the Metropolitan-Suburban province as well as to the Western province, and I would ask if there has not been a slight exaggeration in the speech we have listened to, to say nothing of a maze of technicalities, dealing with periodicities and 40-cycle currents, which, I frankly confess, I am unable to follow; because it is purely a technical matter, and could only have been introduced, one would think, to support the hon. member's views. Whether it has done so or not, it will be for the Council to decide. I do not think it would take up very much time to deal with the matter when we get into Committee. I have received a letter from the Cottesloe Municipality, and one in somewhat similar terms from the South Perth Municipality, pointing out in the case of Cottesloe that if the Government runs their lines through their district they do not want the Government to enter into competition with them. I hope the leader of the House, before getting the second reading through, will give the House an assurance that he will not rush the Committee stage, so that we may have an opportunity of consulting those parties who are concerned, or who think they are concerned, in this particular Bill. So far as I can understand the Fremantle attitude, it is this. They assert that under an Act of Parliament they have a monopoly in the supply of electric current and they object to the Government main going through their municipality for the purpose of supplying the Naval Base. I am speaking now of the attitude of Fremantle when I say that seems to be an unwarranted objection. For my part, if I thought any serious, or even slight, injustice was being done to Fremantle I should

range myself on the side of the hon. members who have spoken this evening.

Hon. J. F. Allen interjected.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Apparently I have misunderstood the attitude of those hon. members. So far as I can gather, they object to the main running through Fremantle for the purpose of supplying the Naval Base. In discussing this matter with those hon. gentlemen one is at a slight disadvantage. They have the whole thing at their finger tips, and it cannot be expected that those who have not a complete knowledge of the subject can have the same "punch" and knowledge of detail they have. Hon. members will agree, I think, that one of the main arguments of the two speakers who preceded me was that the Government should not be permitted to bring their main through the area at Fremantle protected by this concession, for the purpose of supplying the Naval Base.

Hon. R. J. Lynn interjected.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Surely hon. members cannot deny that. I want to get to the point of being assured whether I am correct in assuring that one of the main points of objection raised by those hon. members was that the Government should not be permitted to bring their line through the Fremantle area. If those hon. members deny that, then I admit my argument falls to the ground. I have no intention of dealing with the technical points, such as the requirements of the engines or motors. We are not discussing that, but merely the meaning of this particular Bill. It is a very short Bill, and the only point of argument is in the third clause. We have been listening for a couple of hours to those two speakers and I should like other hon. members to confine themselves to that point and say from their own recollection of what those two members stated whether I have not set forth the gist of their objections. If there is not to be a division on the second reading of the Bill there will be an opportunity of dealing with that matter further. The second point raised is as to whether the Government should be permitted to run a cable through Fremantle for the purpose of supplying Government

departments. So far as I am concerned, the argument that the Government should not be permitted to run through for the purpose of supplying the naval base does not appeal to me; but on the second argument, as to whether the Government should supply Government departments, I think we might have some discussion when in Committee. I would now only ask an assurance from the leader of the House that he will not rush the Bill through the Committee stage so that members may have an opportunity of communicating with other bodies who, equally with Fremantle, are interested in the passage of this Bill.

The Colonial Secretary: We can take it to-morrow night.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is rather short notice. I shall not weary the House at this stage with the details of a debate which occurred in the House a couple of years ago in regard to the electric lighting question, and shall reserve any further remarks at this stage. I hope that some hon. members, apart from the members for the West province, will agree with me that the points mentioned are the only ones raised.

The Colonial Secretary: Those are the only two points so far as I know.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: But that is denied. It is useless the leader of the House assuring us that those are the only points when it is denied by the two hon. members who must be accepted as authorities on the question. I entirely agree with the leader of the House, but I wish to hear what our friends from Fremantle say on the point.

The Colonial Secretary: If you read the Bill you will see that it is so.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I agree, but there again Mr. Lynn and Mr. Allen deny that that is the point at issue. I do not see what the very technical details given to the House have to do with the matter at this stage. When two great authorities, the leader of the House on one hand and the members for the West province on the other, disagree how is one to get at the correct position? It is worse than the Arbitration Court. After carefully listening to hon. members

for nearly two hours with the closest attention I am told I have got the wrong end of the stick and do not know what I am talking about. If I may have an assurance from the leader of the House that he will not rush this Bill through Committee I may say that personally I shall be very much obliged.

On motion by Hon. H. P. Colebatch, debate adjourned.

BILL — NEWCASTLE-BOLGART RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Received from the Legislative Assembly and read a first time.

House adjourned at 8.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 7th September, 1915.

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

QUESTION — WAR AND UNEMPLOYMENT DISTRESS RELIEF FUND.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (without notice) asked the Honorary Minister:

1, Has his attention been drawn to a placard, on the walls of the Immigration Office, stating "The War and Unemployment Distress Relief Fund is exhausted, and the committee have been compelled to further reduce the relief afforded for bare necessities of life, and 800 children are appealing for food. Donations received within"? 2, Have the Government been informed that such distress exists? 3, If so, why have the Government not afforded the necessary relief from the State Children's Department to these children? 4, Will he give instructions forthwith to have this objectionable placard removed from a Government building? 5, Will the Government consider the advisability of giving the War and Unemployment Distress Relief Fund Committee a building in a less public position to administer their funds?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister) replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3, Practically answered by No. 2; but I desire to say this in regard to the subject, that the State never allows a child to want. 4, I will consider the matter. 5, No. The War and Unemployment Distress Relief Fund Committee also administer the Patriotic Fund, and it is advisable that that fund should have a central office.

QUESTION — STATE SAWMILLS, LAND CLEARED.

Mr. S. STUBBS (for Mr. Allen) asked the Minister for Works: 1, What was the cost of clearing the four acres of land at Big Brook, namely, the land adjoining the cottages erected for employees of the State Sawmills? 2, Why was the land cleared, and for what purpose is it at present used or intended to be used?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Eleven acres of land have been cleared, not four acres. The cost of clearing amounted to £17 per acre. 2, For the purposes of a school and an orchard.