

BILL—MOUNT LAWLEY RE-SERVES.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 11.55 p.m.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—1910-11.

In Committee of Supply.

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

Railway Department (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Vote—*Railways*, £1,154,652 :

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory) said : It gives me more pleasure than usual to ask the Committee to approve the Estimates under consideration for the Minister for Railways, because I think we can this year point to a far more prosperous period in connection with our railway system than has been the case for some years past. Hon. members who have perused the report of the Commissioner of Railways, and also taken into consideration the statements made by the Treasurer in the course of the Budget speech will recognise that in the general prosperity of the State the railways have had their fair share. In the railway system we have the chief asset of the State, an asset upon which the great proportion of our Loan Fund has been expended. One recognises that trade is increasing, and our railway system is able to show a very fair return on the capital expended. I do not want to wade too deeply into figures, but I would like to point out that, whereas four years ago, in 1906-7 we had 1,764 miles of railways open, we estimate that at the end of the financial year 1910-11 we will have 2,344 miles open for traffic ; and whereas our capital expenditure in 1906-7 was £10,300,938, it is estimated that at the end of this financial year it will be £11,700,000. The interest on the outlay, comparing the same periods, was £358,734 in 1906-7 while it is estimated that at the end of the current financial year it will be £400,000. Our earnings in 1906-7 were £1,537,333. In 1907-8 the earnings showed a slight decrease, having been £1,501,925. Last year they amounted to £1,637,334 and this year we estimate they will reach a record for Western Australia, in the sum of approximately £1,756,000—and I may state this is a most conservative estimate. We do not like making the estimate

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 9th December, 1910.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 10.30 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—RAILWAY GOODS SHEDS, BUNBURY.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways : Whether he will make inquiries with a view of taking steps to relieve the serious block which it is complained exists at the Bunbury goodsheds.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied : I understand there has been some little trouble owing to the erection of new sheds, and I will make inquiries forthwith with a view of seeing what can be done.

BILL—BUNBURY MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

Introduced by Hon. Sir N. J. Moore and read a first time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. GORDON, leave of absence for one fortnight granted to Mr. Hayward (Wellington) on the ground of ill-health.

too large, although there is a feeling that we are going to have a bountiful harvest, and it is recognised that with the large amount of land settlement going on considerable traffic will be created in supplying the requirements of the farmers, in consequence of which we may look forward to a large increase of revenue. When we framed these Estimates the great discovery at Southern Cross was unthought of. Since then, as hon. members know, there have been many other mining discoveries in different districts, all of which will serve to inflate the railway revenue. Our working expenses in 1906-7 were £1,135,907. That was reduced in 1907-8 and again in 1908-9, when it stood at £973,871. This year our estimate of working expenses is £1,154,652. This, I may say, is based upon the estimated earnings of £1,756,000. If we earn more, as we expect to do, of course our expenses will go up in proportion, but the proportion we have shown here will in all probability be maintained as between earnings and working expenses. After paying working expenses our surplus in 1906-7 was £401,426, while this year we estimate it will be £601,348. Of course, with greater earnings, although the working expenses will be greater, our surplus will increase. Our profit after paying working expenses and interest in 1906-7 amounted to £42,692. In 1907-8 this increased to £128,009; in 1908-9 it was £156,980; in 1909-10 it fell to £153,111, while this year we estimate it will reach £201,348. That, I think, shows very clearly that our loan expenditure on railways has been a wise one and that we have a most payable asset in our railway system. It also shows that every care has been taken in the administration of our railways and that the interests of the State in this regard have been well conserved. It must be remembered that during the period under review there have been considerable reductions in our freight charges from time to time. We have made reductions on the freight of timber and on grain and, having assimilated the freights on the different lines we have now none of those anomalies which were

allowed to exist for years—none, I say, with the exception of certain apparent anomalies on the Perth-Fremantle line in respect to which, of course, we have the competition of the river boats. On the expenditure side we have had to enter into an agreement with the Goldfields Water Supply Department and a larger sum is being paid for our water supplies than formerly, while very large increases have been made in wages paid. In many other ways we have had to increase our expenditure, so I think the position is one reflecting great credit on the Commissioner. The usual tables showing the mileages, the costs per train mile, and the working expenses per train mile I will not deal with because these can be found in the Commissioner's report. The only way in which they are valuable is by comparison with previous years, and those comparisons can be seen in the report. During the past year there have been certain additions to the railway system. The Mundaring Weir branch has been taken over from the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, it being considered that that line could be run with more advantage by the working railways than as a separate system.

Hon. Sir N. J. Moore: What have been the results of the excursions?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think the excursions have been in vogue for sufficient time to enable us to judge. They were run for some time and then stopped, but we propose to continue them for a couple of years to see if the public cannot be induced to spend their Sundays in the hills.

Mr. Bolton: The *bona fide* traveller clause in the Licensing Bill will do away with the necessity for excursions.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: At any rate, I hope that it will be possible to continue the excursions. The Widgiemooltha-Norseman line was taken over during the last financial year, giving us some 56 additional miles of railway; and we also took over the Newcastle-Bolgart line 23 miles, and the Pinjarrah-Marrinup line 14 miles, making a total of 100 miles of additional railway. We have taken over since the 30th June

the Mt. Magnet-Black Range line, 93 miles; the Meekatharra line, 24 miles; the Upper Chapman line, 26 miles, and the Marrinup Extension, 2 miles, a total of 145 miles. The total mileage now worked by the Railway Department is 2,290 miles. Then, in addition, we have a number of railways authorised by Act and now in course of construction; they are the Port Hedland-Marble Bar line, 114 miles; Bridgetown-Wilgarrup, 22 miles; Dowerin-Merredin, 97 miles; Goomalling-Wongan Hills, 33 miles; Boyup-Kojonup, 52 miles, and the Bullfinch, 26 miles, a total of 344 miles. When these are completed it will bring the total mileage for the State up to 2,634 miles. Then we have other lines for which funds have been authorised by the Loan Act but the construction of which is not yet authorised by special Acts, viz., the Marrinup-Marradong line, an approximate length of 12 miles; Merredin-Wickepin, 110 miles; Northampton-Murchison, 40 miles; Tambellup-Chirrellilup, 32 miles; Wagin-Darkan, 44 miles; Greenhills-Quairading Extension, 50 miles; Katanning to Shannon's Soak, 30 miles; and Wagin-Dumbleyung Extension, 15 miles, a total of 333, and they, when constructed, will give us a railway system of nearly 3,000 miles. This will, of course, necessitate a very large expenditure on rolling stock. We are not dealing with the Loan Estimates now, and I have no desire to deal in any detail with matters that should properly be discussed on the Loan Estimates; but as there is a feeling that the rolling stock is insufficient to cope with the requirements I want to let the House know what rolling stock has been put in hand, how much we have under construction, and that for which authorisation has been requested by the Commissioner. The annual return, of course, shows the rolling stock up to the end of June, but since then we have constructed at the railway workshops one locomotive of class "Oa" and 143 4-wheeled wagons, whilst at the Westralia Ironworks we have had built 118 4-wheeled wagons. We have under construction now at the Midland workshops 4 locomotives of class "Oa." Ten locomotives of class "C" are to

be built but they will not be started for some time. Then there are seven lavatory cars, two cars of class "AD," two vans of class "Za," 25 cattle waggons of class "B," and 50 louvre vans of class "Fa." These are being specially built for the carriage of perishables on long distances. We are also making 39 coal boxes, with a view to coping with the increased coal traffic, and 357 4-wheeled wagons. Thus we have, in addition to the 143 waggons constructed at the workshops, and 118 constructed at the Westralia Ironworks, these 357 now under construction at Midland Junction, and a further 300 in hand at the Westralia Ironworks. I think, that for this year we should have ample rolling stock for our requirements. In addition we have ordered three Garratt locomotives from Great Britain. We have been anxious to get these locomotives quickly. Engines of this type have been in use on the Tasmanian railways for some time and are particularly good on high grades and short turns, and we want to see how they will act on the spur lines here. We are making very great alterations in our workshops, and a large amount of money, about £100,000, will be expended in buildings and machinery with a view to being able to undertake the manufacture of locomotives. Although we have 10 under authorisation at the present time, I hope that the day is not far distant when we shall be able to manufacture the whole of our locomotives in the State. It will be necessary for us to order a certain number of heavy locomotives from the old country in the near future. These locomotives have been authorised for some time, but the whole of the detailed drawings have had to be altered with a view to providing a different type from that which we have had in the past? On account of the large expansion of our railway system, we shall want, in addition to the stock I have already alluded to, 20 class "E" locomotives, 12 class "F" locomotives, 15 suburban locomotives, 30 "A.C.L." lavatory cars, 1,000 4-wheeled wagons, 25 louvre vans, 50 sheep vans, 25 cattle vans, and 15 brake vans. The total value of the rolling

stock which has been constructed from the 1st July is £36,193. That under construction in the workshops is £125,734, and that already in hand at Westralia Ironworks is £89,193, making a total of £214,927, which with the £36,000 worth constructed since the 1st July, brings up the total to £250,000. In addition, the other requirements which I have just enumerated as the programme for the next three years will represent a cost of £500,000, so that nearly three-quarters of a million pounds worth of stock is being added to our railway system. Although this is a large sum, it must be remembered that a very large extent of new railways is being opened up, and it must be pleasing to members generally to consider that the Government are doing all they possibly can to see that the manufacture not only of cars and waggons, but also of locomotives, is undertaken in Western Australia. It is a fact with which I have always been pleased that since I have been in office not a single order for cars and waggons has gone outside of the State, and we are spending nearly £100,000 for the purpose of increasing the workshops with the view of enabling us to manufacture within the State all the rolling stock that may be required. We have a great advantage in the fact that there is competition between the Government workshops and outside firms, and so long as we can manage to have the work constructed in the State at what the Chief Mechanical Engineer considers is a fair price, I do not think we should be adopting a bad policy in continuing to give some work to private firms. Even if we do increase the size of the workshops, I do not think that we will be able to get out the work as fast as we may desire, and for some time at least I hope that we will be able to keep not only the Government workshops fully employed with a larger staff of men, but also the private workshops outside. Just here I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that there has been a slight omission from the annual report in connection with the stores account, and I want to give the accounts here

in order to have them on record. The stores in hand on the 30th June of last year amounted to £210,967; the receipts during 1909-10 were £345,442, making a total of £556,409. The issues during the last financial year were £363,317, and the apparent value of the stores in hand on 30th June, 1910, was £193,092. The certificate of the Comptroller of Stores shows £196,953, an apparent excess of stores of £3,861. That excess is accounted for thus: (a) Stores in course of manufacture are not included in the receipts for 1909-10, they being not complete, but the material from which they are being manufactured is included in the value of stores on hand, it having been paid for and the Comptroller of Stores being responsible for it. This represents £3,425. (b) Book adjustments represent £346. From the balance sheet the funds provided for the purpose of stores amounted to £195,392, whilst the stores on hand, including material in course of manufacture, represent £196,953, a difference of £1,561. That difference is accounted for by (a) Railway Stores Suspense Account, i.e., accounts passed for payment for 1909-10 but not paid by the 30th June, £1,563; (b) Less certain shipping rebates, £2. That statement, as I said before, was omitted from the Railway Department, and for that I must apologise. For that reason I desired to have it on record. Included in the new works in hand this year is a good deal of relaying, and I mention this because a large proportion of this work is to be paid for from revenue. We have authorised the laying of 60lb. rails instead of 45lb. rails from Narrogin towards Yornaning, a distance of 14 miles, and from Yornaning towards Beverley, 20 miles. That work is completed. We have in hand the completion of the relaying of the section from Beverley to Narrogin and from Narrogin to Wagin, a total of 59 miles, and we have also ordered rails for the purpose of continuing the relaying from Wagin to Katanning. These rails are ordered, so that at the end of this year we hope to have the 60lb. rails from Fremantle to Katanning.

Mr. Piesse : What about the Katanning to Albany section ?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : Authority has not been given for the heavier rails from Katanning to Albany, but the Commissioner has asked for it. He has asked that we should purchase 60lb. rails to enable the department to lay them from Katanning to Albany, Armadale to Brunswick, and Donnybrook to Picton Junction. We want to be able to run our heavy and fast engines from Albany to Fremantle on account of the great progress that has taken place along the Great Southern line. We find it is essential that heavier trains must be run than formerly. Also with the growth of the coal trade, particularly for bunkering, and with the progress in the South-West, the Commissioner thinks it advisable we should lay the Donnybrook-Picton and Armadale-Brunswick sections with the heavier rails. The point has not yet been decided, but it will be a matter for consideration before the Loan Estimates are submitted. Why I mention these figures now is because of the increase it will mean to our working expenses. For the work already in hand it will mean an increase in working expenses of £37,600. It means a very large item in our working expenses to carry out this relaying.

Mr. Johnson : Does the Minister know anything about the labour conditions in connection with the relaying ?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : No.

Mr. Johnson : You are using fettlers to do platelayers' work and thus reducing wages.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : If that is the case I am satisfied the men employed will let us know.

Mr. Johnson : I propose to deal with it this morning.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : If there is anything contrary to the arrangements made in our industrial agreements some complaint would have been made by those interested. I want to say straight out that if there is anything wrong, if we are not carrying out an industrial agreement in its entirety it is due to the Minister and the Com-

missioner and the State that when anything is wrong we should be advised as speedily as possible, so that an inquiry might be made. If we are not carrying out any agreement it is our duty to do so.

Mr. Johnson : The difficulty is there seems to be an organised attempt to undermine that agreement.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : That is nonsense.

Mr. Johnson : I will give some instances that have been brought under the notice of the Commissioner time after time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS : Once we enter into an agreement with the railway men we try to carry out that agreement faithfully ; and if any of the engineers, in their desire to lower working costs, contravene the agreement. I am sure the Commissioner will see that the agreement is carried out ; and that is all we want. I was pointing out that this relaying will mean an expenditure of £37,600 for working expenses, and this sum must be provided out of revenue. In reply to the member for Katanning I may say that it will be for the Government to decide whether we will be able to make provision this year for further relaying beyond Katanning. The work is already in hand from Narrogin to Wagin, and the rails are ordered to enable the work to be done from Wagin to Katanning. It is pleasing to be able to say that the whole of the cost of our loss in connection with the fire which occurred at Midland Junction workshops, amounting to nearly £40,000 worth of rolling stock, has already been provided out of working expenses ; and, in addition, we have now in hand, and will have finished in January, a new large paint shop, fitted up with all the latest improvements. We will be able to get solidly to work in the new paint shop towards the end of January. We have also started the construction of new workshops, building them up to the capacity recommended when the workshops were first designed. We are doing this at a cost of £62,204. Towards the total cost of the additional machinery required £12,000 has been

authorised, making a total of £74,204. There are a large number of small works being carried out, the details of which I do not propose to deal with at present. I may say that in connection with our district railways, that is the spur railways which are being built, there is a great demand for increased facilities. When we asked Parliament to agree to the construction of these lines it was definitely understood by Parliament that they were to be constructed as lightly and as cheaply as possible. All we desired was to give these people the means of getting their produce to market. They wanted nothing in the nature of special requirements, platforms, railway sidings, officers in charge, or ladies' waiting rooms, and things of that sort; all we had to do was to give them railways, give them the provision to enable them to get their produce to market, and they would be satisfied. But it does not satisfy them, and demands are continually being made for increased conveniences on these railways; and undoubtedly in many cases the requests made by these people are justified, because there has been such a great growth of traffic. For instance, last year we carried 100,000 bags of grain over the Dowerin line, and on the Wagin-Dumbleyung and Narrogin-Wickepin and other lines there has been a great increase in settlement and production. Undoubtedly we will be compelled, if not to give these places all they ask, to spend considerable sums for the purpose of giving facilities that are absolutely necessary in regard to new buildings, sidings, and ramps, and other facilities which will be necessary. If I continue to hold my present office I propose during recess to go right through these districts with the Commissioner so that we will be able to come to some decision as to what will be necessary for the following harvest, and to obtain the necessary authority for the expenditure of money to give better facilities to these settlers than they now enjoy. But at present, to keep down the expenditure, we must ask these people to take some responsibility on themselves at these

small sidings, because it cannot be expected of us, where there are only two trains a week and there is only a small amount of trade, that we should keep officers in charge on these small places. I cannot understand why some arrangement cannot be made by the settlers themselves so as to enable a local person to be engaged by the residents to take over the responsibility in connection with goods that may arrive at these sidings; because if we are going to carry out the promise made to Parliament when the authorisations for these railways were given, we cannot go to the expense, and I do not think it is justified in the circumstances, of having officers in charge of these stations where there are only two trains a week.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You have not a station-master at Dwellingup, where there is more traffic than that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course there are many places, such as Wickepin and Dumbleyung, which are very important, and there will be officers in charge there; but there are many sidings in between Narrogin and Wickepin and Dumbleyung and Wagin where we will not be able to have officers in charge. However, I propose to go through the whole of these districts with the Commissioner during the recess to see what is necessary to be done to afford better facilities than they now enjoy. One matter that should be of interest is the increases that have been given to our salaried officers. Provision is made on these Estimates for increases to officers in receipt of salaries of £150 and over to the amount of £2,425; and to officers in receipt of under £150 to the amount of £1,555.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is a disparity; it should be the other way.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; I think that if the hon. member will look carefully into it he will find there is no disparity and that there has been a very fair classification. At any rate the classification and other increases mean an advance of £3,980 for these officers. A more liberal scale of increments for cadets has been granted, starting from the 1st December

of this year. Under the old scale the salary for the first year was £40; we have increased that to £50.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Have the increments that were due been paid?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows that the increments were made from last year. In regard to cadets, under the old scale the salary was £60 for the second year, it is now fixed at £70; for the third year it was £70, it is now fixed at £80; for the fourth year it was £90, it is now £100; for the fifth year it was £100, it is now £110; for the sixth year it was £110, and it has been advanced to £125; for the seventh year it was £120, and is now £140; while for the eighth year the increase has been from £130 to £150; while in special cases the Commissioner will have power to give £160 per annum. So hon. members will see that so far as the cadets are concerned we have adopted a new scale which, I hope, will give satisfaction to the cadets. It means an increase per annum of approximately £2,000. I have a statement of the advances to the wages staff granted since the 1st July of this year. The wages staff has been completely examined, and increases totalling £7,500 per annum have been given. A large number of men at 8s. and 8s. 6d. per day have had their wages increased. The total increase to our Estimates this year in this direction is £13,480, that is to say, £3,980 for the clerical staff, about £2,000 for the cadets and £7,500 for the wages staff, or a total of £13,480. I think it will be interesting to point out the increase in the average daily wage for the wages staff. In 1907 it was 8s. 2-39d.; in 1908 it advanced to 8s. 7-72d.; in 1909 it was 8s. 11-62d.; while in September of this year the average payment for the whole of our wages staff in the railway system was 9s. 0-17d. per day. I think that is a very interesting return; it also shows that with our increasing prosperity we have not forgotten to see that the wages men obtain their share.

Mr. Bolton: Do you include juniors in that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Do you mean cadets?

Mr. Bolton: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It refers to all wages men.

Mr. Bolton: Junior labourers and porters?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, all those we term the wages staff as being different from the salaried staff.

Mr. Gill: Do you include the tradesmen in the workshops?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, all the men. The member for Forrest when speaking on the Address-in-Reply drew attention to the sawmill which was recently erected at the flora and fauna reserve, and pointed out that the mill would probably reflect against the introduction of a State sawmill. This and other criticisms might have been then justified, but I would point out that when we obtained control of that reserve there was an urgent demand for timber on our railways, and we desired to get to work as speedily as we could and the mill which we established there was made up of various parts picked up from different places in the State. We established this temporary plant there with a view of getting our timber as speedily as possible, but it is proposed in the near future to erect an up-to-date mill which I think will be a credit to the department, and a valuable adjunct to the State. It is necessary that we should have such a mill to meet the requirements of our railway system. With our 2,000 miles of railways and taking the life of a sleeper at 15 years, we shall want on an average for maintenance purposes 281,600 sleepers per annum, or 5,415 sleepers per week. Then, with the increasing railway mileage of 200 miles per annum, we shall require another 28,160 sleepers per annum, or 541 sleepers per week. A fully equipped mill will produce 4,800 sleepers per week, so that it will be seen that one mill will be hardly sufficient for all our needs. This small mill which we have erected will be fully utilised in addition to the more up to date mill we propose to erect. We have now some very valuable timber

reserves, and we propose to supply not only the Working Railways Department but the Public Works Department with all the sleepers they require, not only in connection with the maintenance of our present railway system, but to supply all sleepers required for the construction of future railways, and we therefore hope that the mill which we have, and the new and up to date mill which we propose to erect, will be ample for our requirements.

Mr. O'Loughlin: When are you going to start the new mill?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Designs are being prepared at the present time. It will be hurried on, and I hope that when we have that mill erected it will be one which the hon. member will be satisfied with, and that it will be a credit not only to the department but to the timber industry.

Sir Newton Moore: What do you say the requirements of the permanent way are?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Five thousand four hundred and fifteen sleepers per week.

Mr. O'Loughlin: For the 200 additional miles of railways which are being constructed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have now timber reserves aggregating 742,200 acres. Those have been reserved, and we are trying to get the reservation of 200,000 acres of karri country. That may be necessary for us to work a small mill to provide karri and other timbers for our workshops. There is one matter of some interest I think to the goldfields people that I desire to refer to, and it is in connection with our excursions. A numerously signed petition has been presented to me by goldfields people asking for special consideration for the purpose of bringing children to the coast. I recently made a considerable reduction on the zone system to enable the various leagues on the goldfields to bring children to the coast at a low rate. We propose to make the same charge from Southern Cross to Fremantle, and from Laverton to Albany, or from Laverton to Busselton or Bunbury, and then the peo-

ple will be able to select whichever port they desire to go to, and they will be able to proceed to those places from the destinations I have mentioned at one charge, and one charge only. We propose to charge 12s. 6d. per head for each child, and for one female adult who will accompany every five children 25s. That is a considerable reduction, and to a great extent will get over the complaints of the poorer classes of the community on the goldfields that owing to the high cost of travelling they in the past have been unable to bring their children to the coast.

Mr. Bolton: Will they be return fares?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, yes. It will mean travelling over a distance of 1,500 miles, and a child under the age of 13 years will be able to cover that journey for 12s. 6d., and a female adult for 25s. I do not think any complaint can be made on that score. The people on the goldfields, or a number of the residents who do not like to send their children down under the auspices of the league, prefer to accompany their children themselves, and to travel to the southern ports during the summer months at a low rate. These people ask that some special consideration be given to them so that they might have the opportunity of spending a few months near the sea. This opportunity will be given to them, and they will be able to send their children from Laverton to Albany at a return cost of 12s. 6d.

Mr. Bolton: That is about 10d. per hundred miles; it is not bad.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Although no great reduction has been made in regard to these special excursions, we propose to run them on two days a week instead of one day a week as was the case formerly. I desire now to do something better, and I want to get rid of that cry that the people on the goldfields cannot come to the coast except by the expenditure of a large sum of money. We propose after the Christmas holidays are over to have two special excursion trains during January, and to make the return fare exceeding low, and to provide that it shall be available for

at least two months. This will enable the people from any part of the Eastern goldfields to proceed to Albany, Busselton, Bunbury, or Fremantle. I have not yet arrived at a determination as to what the rate shall be, but it will be on lines somewhat similar to those on which we carry the children for the Fresh Air League. The same thing of course will apply to the people who are resident on the Murchison goldfields, and it will enable the poorer classes of the community to enjoy these special excursions on two days of each month to be fixed. Of course this will not take effect until after the Christmas holidays. I feel confident that the proposal will meet with the appreciation of the people, and will prove satisfactory in every way. I do not know that I can say anything further in connection with the railway system. There may be some criticisms to answer, but I would like to refer to the financial position of the railway system, because every hon. member must regard the railways as being the chief asset of the State. I have a return for the four months ended 31st December of each year since 1908, and the figures are as follows:—In 1908 our earnings were £489,754; in 1909 the total was £486,863, and for the first four months of the present financial year £567,506. Hon. members will thus see what a great increase has taken place in the railway traffic this year. Then our working expenses during the same period were:—In 1908, £335,247; in 1909, £334,882, and in 1910, £361,114. The interest bill in 1908 was £125,000; in 1909, £128,000, and in 1910, £133,000. The balances in the first four months show a difference between our earnings and working expenses and interest on capital expenditure of in 1908, £29,275; in 1909, £23,578, and for the first four months of this financial year £72,660. That is a very satisfactory return indeed, and one that should be most gratifying to all those who have the interests of the State at heart. I do not propose to say anything further in connection with our railway system at the present time. Hon. members in criticising the department I hope will give us

credit for not only an improved financial position, but in so framing our Estimates as to give consideration to all classes of our workers.

Mr. BOLTON (North Fremantle): It was generally admitted that the financial outlook for the railways was eminently satisfactory. The estimated earnings for the ensuing year, like most other estimates, consisted largely of guess work, and the Railway Department being such a huge concern, it followed that the earnings could be increased or decreased in the closing months of any financial year to make them approximate the estimate. In the past there had been a shortage of employees.

The Minister for Railways: We are increasing the staff.

Mr. BOLTON: No doubt if labour were available the staff would be increased even more rapidly. In the past it had been possible for the railways to keep within the estimated expenditure by decreasing the staff, and in consequence the estimated expenditure of the department had always turned out more nearly accurate than the estimate of any other department. Still, we all hoped that the estimated earnings and profit would be realised without any necessity for manipulation of any sort. The railways were the greatest institution in the State, and were expected to make a profit of a kind. It was gratifying to all to know that the railways were enjoying such bright prospects. The Minister had made a great point in regard to some extra relaying and had declared that some 5,400 sleepers per week would be necessary for that relaying. As a matter of fact there was a good deal of relaying required. Had this relaying been taken in hand and kept up from year to year, instead of having been allowed to accumulate, it would not have cost the large amount of money indicated by this weekly requirement of over 5,000 sleepers.

The Minister for Railways: Do you mean relaying or maintenance?

Mr. BOLTON: The contention applied to both relaying and ordinary maintenance. Had these two factors been at

tended to each year this expense would not have been felt. Given a length of 100 miles of relaying, was it not possible to relay 50 miles in one year and 50 in the next? At the present time we had sections of our railways along which the heavier rail extended for part of the length only, the remainder of the relaying having been allowed to stand over for a succeeding year. The Minister himself had explained that it was proposed to relay only a portion of the Great Southern with the heavier rails, the reason being, of course, that the expense of relaying the whole would be too much to undertake in any one year.

The Minister for Railways: You must remember the great expenditure entailed in the purchase of 60lb. rails.

Mr. BOLTON: Still, the expenditure ought to be extended over more than one year. A huge expenditure had been incurred in the blue metal ballasting on the suburban lines. No better work than that was ever undertaken by the Railway Department, but it was a penny wise and pound foolish policy to expend that money and, because it resulted in a very superior class of ballasting, to withdraw the labour necessary for the maintenance of that particular length until it should get into disrepair. Notwithstanding that the length had been so exceedingly well built up on the blue metal ballast some labour was required to maintain it at its highest standard. As a matter of fact that blue metal ballast was not in as good condition to-day as it had been three or four years ago, and its condition was getting worse, while assuredly the time would come when considerable expenditure would be required for labour along that length of line until its upkeep would be as heavy as that required to maintain lengths not provided with such excellent ballast.

The Minister for Railways: The permanent way of the working railways was never in better condition than it is to-day.

Mr. BOLTON: It was not proposed to dispute that general statement. What he was pointing out was that a section of the railway which was par excellence for Australia—for there had been nothing in the Commonwealth that could compare

with it when first it was laid down—was being allowed to fall into disrepair. It did not follow that because an exceedingly good ballast was put in the maintenance of the length should be entirely neglected. Surely it required some attention at least. He did not say there was any danger, nor that the length was in a bad state of repair, but the point was that unless some attention was given to it it would require a very heavy expenditure to put it right. It was significant, too, that since the staff was reduced on that section there had been two accidents at Claremont; and we did not know when there would be a third.

The Minister for Railways: Our accident record has been very creditable.

Mr. BOLTON: Undoubtedly our record in this respect would compare with that of any part of the world. We had fewer accidents on our railway system than occurred anywhere else. This was largely due to the presence of a highly competent staff. There was no more competent staff in the civilised world than the railway staff of Western Australia. Our immunity from accidents was due very largely to the excellence of that staff. But, with regard to the sleepers necessary for the relaying, it did not require an expert to point out the difference between the value of a green sleeper and one that was properly seasoned. The position to-day was that we had no sleepers on hand for relaying, and it followed that those we would purchase would be comparatively green. We were told we would require upwards of 5,000 a week for maintenance. That being so, we should have hundreds of thousands of sleepers in stock lying seasoning. For the seasoning was of the utmost importance, more particularly in regard to jarrah. If we had a given length laid with properly seasoned sleepers, the life of that length would be over 20 years; while the life of a corresponding length laid with green sleepers would not be more than 10 years. Consequently it was worth the necessary expenditure to stack sleepers until they were properly seasoned. He had noticed with pleasure that the Minister proposed to put in additional ramps at some of our sidings devoted almost entirely to the

handling of wheat. It was heartbreaking for the farmers to arrive at a siding with loads of wheat, and, for lack of ramp space, be compelled to dump the wheat on to the ground. Then when the trucks came along—and he was glad to be able to say the department had, last season, served these farmers very well with trucks—it was painful to see the men loading wheat into the trucks from the ground. The expenditure on additional lengths of ramps would be very small, and if the Minister could possibly increase these lengths at sidings where large quantities of wheat was handled it should certainly be done. But at sidings where there was a fair quantity of wheat delivered the expenditure of a very few pounds, probably not more than £10 or so, would put in 30 or 40 feet of ramp made out of old sleepers. The Commissioner should be able to do that. If at an expenditure of £10 or so he could assist the farmers in loading their wheat it was one of the best possible things that could be done for them. They had to load their own wheat, and it was no easy thing to load wheat from the ground, especially when the line was boxed up as it generally was, and the men were unable to stand near the trucks. He had tried loading wheat himself and knew that it was no easy matter. The Minister had pointed out that there had been an increase in the wages of the staff during the last three or four years, and he had given the average in 1907 as 8s. 2d., then it had gone up to 8s. 7d., and then to 8s. 11d., and this year it was 9s. That did not show a very great deal of improvement. The members of the Opposition had never raised the point as to the average wage. The point they had always made was that the minimum was not sufficient. An increase from 8s. 11d. last year to 9s. this year might be all right if spread over the whole wages staff, totalling 5,147, but a penny increase on the average could easily have been brought about by ten per cent. of those employees being given an increase. What he did urge was that the minimum wage was not a living wage, and although he admitted that it was larger than it had

been a few years ago, it should be remembered that living was dearer also.

Mr. Foulkes: That is the result of Federation.

Mr. BOLTON: Whatever the cause, the fact remained that living was dearer. The penny increase since last year looked a good deal more than it really was, but it proved absolutely nothing. His contention had always been for an increase of wages for those in receipt of the minimum. It had never been advocated from the Opposition side that the highly paid man or the skilled labourer was not in receipt of a living wage. It was the lower paid man whose cause they had advocated, and if these unskilled positions were raised one shilling per day all round it would not bring the increase of the average up to more than 9s. 0½d., because the proportion of unskilled labour was very small. He desired to express his regret that the Railway Department had lost the services of Mr. Triggs, who was one of the cleverest men we had had in that department and perhaps ever would have. When he had come to this State he had taken over the task of reorganising the department which he controlled and had carried that work to a splendid issue, and now when he left the service it was in a much better position than when he had entered it. He had no first hand knowledge, but he had been told that Mr. Triggs had been treated very shabbily on severing his connection with the department to take up a Commonwealth appointment. He did not know whether the statement was true, but he would ask the Minister to make a note of it and if possible reply briefly as to whether the statement was correct or not. It was stated that when Mr. Triggs accepted the Commonwealth appointment he had rightly claimed certain holidays which were due to him and which had not been taken. Mr. Triggs was told that he could not have those holidays, but a very much smaller number was offered him as he left the department. It was thought, he understood, that Mr. Triggs' reply was not couched in the most polite language, but at any rate no satisfactory arrangement had been entered into. When Mr.

Triggs finally decided to go into the Commonwealth service he had also asked, not as a right, but as a special consideration, that he should be given a pass. Having served so long and having given so many years' faithful service it was the least the department could do for him, and the curt refusal which he received from the Commissioner stating that he had left the department and was not entitled to a pass was at least something less than that officer after his work in the department was entitled to. He made the statement as it was conveyed to him. He did not know whether it was true, but he asked the Minister to give attention to it.

Mr. Angwin: What did he want a pass for?

Mr. BOLTON: Mr. Triggs wanted a pass to carry him by rail from Adelaide to Melbourne, and that was a concession which was given to hundreds that were less deserving.

Mr. Foulkes: Does that apply to men who have left the department?

Mr. BOLTON: It applied to men who had never been in the department.

Mr. Foulkes: But this is a pass for a railway system of another State.

Mr. BOLTON: There was reciprocity between the railway departments of the various States.

The Minister for Railways: That was not the pass. He wanted to retain his State pass for three months after he had left the service.

Mr. Johnson: Well, that was a very modest request from Mr. Triggs, considering his work.

The Minister for Railways: It was not a request, it was an insistence.

Mr. BOLTON: That was not the position as he understood it. He remembered when two clerks in the department, friends of his, had been retrenched from the service they had been assisted very largely by Mr. Triggs, with the consent of the Commissioner, he admitted, and had been given a pass over the railways to look for employment.

The Minister for Railways: That was the instruction given to the Commissioner.

Mr. BOLTON: It was strange that a gentleman who had been at the head of a

department, and with whose work no fault could be found, should be denied a little concession which would cost the State nothing. The pass would not cost even a shilling stamp, in fact, nothing but the dip of a pen in the ink. Had it been an expenditure which could have been questioned by members it would have been different, because the Commissioner and the Minister could have sheltered themselves by saying that Parliament might not authorise it.

The Minister for Railways: The Commissioner did not want him to have the pass and represent himself as a railway man in the other States after he had left the department.

Mr. BOLTON: A man who had been engaged for years in the railway systems of New Zealand and Australia did not want a pass to let people know he was a railway man. He was known all over Australia as a railway man, and one of the cleverest men in his particular line that Australia possessed to-day. That had been recognised by the Commonwealth and his services were to be properly paid for, a position which probably had not obtained in Western Australia. Year after year the complaint had been that insufficient use was made of the Jandakot railway. If expenses were to be cut down there was or there should be a necessity for using the Jandakot railway? Of the enormous traffic coming from the South-West, practically more than 50 per cent. travelled round by Perth instead of going to Fremantle via Jandakot. That state of things was by no means creditable. The Jandakot line had not been built exclusively for goods traffic. In and around the district were suitable positions for residences for workmen and others, and when there was a complete circle from Fremantle to Armadale and back again through Perth, surely some consideration as passengers should be given to these people who were living along the railway. The Jandakot line had always been kept back and it was not being used half as much as it should be. While it was in good order and could be used with advantage it should be used, and it would very much lessen the cost of operations, especially when we were getting towards

the season when the increase of traffic might cause a congestion between the city and the port. There was a good deal of traffic going to Fremantle via Jandakot to-day, but not nearly as much as could be carried. From Cottesloe to Fremantle was four miles and from Cottesloe to Perth eight miles, but when goods were being sent from Cottesloe nothing was taken via Fremantle. While the parties using the railway had to pay the same freight via Perth as via Jandakot on the goods sent to the South-West, it did not matter much to them which route the goods took, but if people were charged the round about rate on these particular goods, he undertook to say that they would very quickly make their voice heard and there would be an alteration. So long as they were charged only the shorter route no complaint was made and the undesirable state of affairs was allowed to continue. Another matter which he desired to bring forward was that year after year the department were losing some of their best men through slight defect in eyesight. They were men engaged in most important branches of the railways, such as drivers, foremen and guards, the most responsible officers employed on the system, exclusive, of course, of those who had to direct operations from the office. He did not advocate that a man not perfect in his sight should remain on the locomotives, but there were men who had served 10 and 20 years in this branch, against whom there was not a black mark and who were thought by the Commissioners and his officers to be some of the best men of Australia, or perhaps in any other country. These men, as soon as their eyesight was slightly defective, were reduced from 15s. a day to 8s. a day, not a dirt shoveller's wage, and could not be given a better position than that of assistant to a washer-out of engines. While we provided superannuation funds and pensions for our judges and for others a long way down the public service list, surely some little thing could be done for those engine-driver who had spent most of their lives in the service of the State and had proved efficient and thoroughly good men. Surely a position could be found for them a little more decent than

that of assistant washer-out at a reduced salary of 8s. a day.

Mr. Piesse: What is the percentage?

Mr. Bolton: It would be hard to give that. There were firemen who received only 10s. a day, and the reduction would not be so keenly felt by them as by those who were in receipt of 15s. a day. There was one man affected who was in the constituency of the hon. member, an officer taken over by the department from the Great Southern Railway Company, a thoroughly competent man, one of the best enginemmen we had. His eyesight was a little defective and, of course, he must go off the locomotive, but it could not be admitted that nothing better could be done for that man than to reduce him to 8s. a day. Speaking in common parlance, it was a bit over the fence. There was always a little parish pump, even in connection with the railways. The traffic at North Fremantle was increasing to such an extent that the Minister might take into consideration the advisability of having a goods agent on the North side of the river. The north side was now cut off from Fremantle, as it was too far away to be controlled by the goods agent at Fremantle; but the work could not be efficiently handled by the stationmaster at North Fremantle. The traffic was growing so much at North Fremantle and it must of necessity be a large place, owing to the works the Government had in hand there. It might be satisfactory to have control by the stationmaster while things were being altered, but the immense shipping traffic on the north side of the river warranted a goods agent for that alone. It would be an advantage to the department to have such an officer managing the export of the next harvest and controlling the stock, and all that sort of thing. The erection of the new overhead bridge at North Fremantle was one of the most expeditious works the Railway Department had ever taken in hand. There was no delay in providing the bridge, but the bridge was no good; that was just the trouble. The complaint was not as to the site; he had nothing to do with that, otherwise he would still be fighting on the point; the trouble was in another direction. The bridge was built

speedily enough, but the department fenced the entrance for about four weeks after the completion of the work; then they awakened to the fact that there were battens closing the bridge and the battens were taken down. The people then thought they would be able to go over the bridge to the ocean beach, but it was impossible. On crossing the bridge they were faced with a big sand hill that came right down to the other approach to the bridge. Certainly there was a road over the hill but it was impossible to use it. The site was decided on by an engineer from the department at a conference with the mayor of North Fremantle without any reference whatever to him (Mr. Bolton), and it was agreed at that conference that if the corporation accepted the site, the corporation would make the approach on the town side of the railway, and the department would make the necessary approach from the ocean side. The corporation made their approach, but the department had not done their share, and so the whole thing was hung up and useless. Representations were made to the Commissioner but no finality was reached. The Minister might take a note of this and see whether it was worth while getting a little move on.

The Minister for Railways: Is it at the wrong site?

Mr. BOLTON: It was in the wrong place. The site he (Mr. Bolton) requested and the site the townspeople wanted was not acceptable to the department because of the huge expansion to the yard at North Fremantle. There was a weighbridge somewhere near it, and it was pointed out that the expansion would be interfered with by the bridge, or that a bridge there would need to be much longer to span the rails, and it seemed a fairly reasonable argument. Even now there were half a hundred men putting down new rails in the North Fremantle yard and shifting the goods shed back as far as they could to make additional roads.

The Minister for Railways: I will make that approach down to the beach.

Mr. BOLTON: It would be a good thing if the Minister would. The bridge could not be used because of the big sand dune on the beach side. Otherwise it was

satisfactory, although he had made an effort to get a ramp instead of steps. The Commissioner had not refused the request to have the road made—there was no desire to be misunderstood on that point—but there was no finality reached. These were the only remarks he wished to make, though there were one or two items on which he wanted a little information. Otherwise he rejoiced with the Minister that the financial position appeared to be satisfactory, and his wish was that it would turn out as prophesied by the Minister, although he always had a little doubt concerning railway figures. Any little thing might interfere with the revenue and necessarily interfere with the profit part of the earnings.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was pleasing to have the opportunity of admitting that during the last few years the railways had shown a vast improvement practically from every point of view. It was said, even by those on the Government side of the House, that the State could not manage an enterprise, that the State could not get the best results, or that the State was a failure in connection with management; but our railways gave the lie direct to statements of that description. Every member would agree that the management of our railways compared more than favourably, so far as we could gather from reading, with the management of railways in any other State of Australia.

Mr. Angwin: Profits do not mean good management.

Mr. JOHNSON: We had in Western Australia a basis of comparison. We saw the working of the Midland Railway—private enterprise—as against the working of our State concern; and in the comparison there was no doubt the State management came out better from every point of view. So we rejoiced because we had this illustration that the State was competent to manage the greatest commercial concern controlled in this State. We had also to rejoice at the standard of the general surroundings that caught the eye in connection with our railways. Anyone who walked on a station could not help noticing the cleanliness of the station, and the general bear-

ing of the employees and condition of the trains.

Mr. Angwin: I have never seen dirtier trains anywhere.

Mr. JOHNSON: That was where hon. members were wrong. Having recently had the pleasure of a trip to the Eastern States he had no hesitation in saying, because he made it his special business to watch, that our railways compared more than favourably with those of any other part of Australia he visited in regard to the hearing of employees, condition of carriages, and cleanliness of engines and general surroundings.

The Minister for Railways: That is the opinion of many travellers.

Mr. JOHNSON: When we found these things it was just as well to cultivate the habit of eulogising where there was room, equally as well as condemning where there was opportunity. Hon. members were too prone to look for the worst features and to emphasise them in connection with our State management. Possibly that was good from an Opposition point of view, but there were occasions, when we were looking for an opportunity to criticise adversely and the opportunity was not there, when it was our duty to give credit where credit was due. There was a matter mentioned in connection with the no-confidence debate which the Minister had omitted to deal with. There was no desire to go into the figures in detail, because they were on record in *Hansard*; but speaking generally, in comparing 1910 with 1906, we found the earnings from goods and coaching were less, and that the earnings per train mile were less, while the profit was over £100,000 more. The big saving in management as compared with 1906 was mainly in connection with wages and salaries; or, to use figures, £70,000, as far as we could gather from the Railways Report, was paid less in wages in 1910 than in 1906. There was, therefore, either the accusation against the present method of management of sweating the employees, or the indictment against the previous management of 1906. So glaring was the comparison between these two periods that it was a feature that the Minister should

have dealt with, because, after all, he was the Minister controlling this department during the whole of the four years, and the vast difference between the years quoted should have been explained to the people of the State. He desired to support the remarks made by the member for North Fremantle in connection with the loss the department had sustained by the resignation of Mr. Triggs. In Mr. Triggs we had one of the brightest railway accountants to be found in Australasia. He was a man who had brought the standard of accounts up to a high state of efficiency, and he had had it on good authority, it had been common practice in Western Australia to receive requests from all parts of the world, including America, for an outline of Western Australian methods in keeping railway accounts, and for a copy of the returns of the Railway Department. No greater compliment could be paid to our department than the fact that these outside people wanted to copy our methods, and when we heard that these requests came from America, and other parts of the world, then we should recognise that in an officer like the late chief accountant, the State had a very competent man. Of course we could not complain about Mr. Triggs' action in endeavouring to improve his position: his new office carried a higher salary and possibly a higher standard from an accountancy point of view than the position he held in Western Australia. It was to be regretted, however, from a State point of view that we had lost this officer. Reference had been made to the fact that it was becoming a common practice to lose our best officers, those officers who stood out as being the bright spots in connection with our administration. For instance, we had lost Dr. Cleland, who was regarded as one of the best bacteriologists in Australia. This officer was taken away by the New South Wales Government, and he resigned simply because the salary paid to him by the State was not commensurate with the duties which he had to perform. Following that there was the resignation of Professor Lowrie, and whatever might be said to the contrary,

that gentleman would not have left the State if his position had been made comfortable. Then, recently, the State lost the services of Mr. Whitely, undoubtedly a clever officer in the Treasury. His administrative abilities were recognised by the representatives of the Government who attended the conference in Melbourne, on the question of the financial relations between the Commonwealth and the State, and who asked Mr. Whitely to accompany them. There was only one way to stop this tendency on the part of our best officers to leave the State, and that was to increase their remuneration. Members on the Opposition side, whose voices were mainly raised in the direction of assisting the men who were getting the minimum wage, were always prepared as a party and as individuals to adequately compensate officers of the State according to the work they were performing.

The Minister for Railways: Complaint was made only the other night that the Government were only looking after the interests of the higher men in the service.

Mr. JOHNSON: Perhaps he had not gone into the Estimates as closely in that direction as other hon. members, but he would point out that special ability would have to be specially compensated by the State if the State desired to retain in its service its best officers, instead of coaching these officers up to a standard and then allowing them to leave the service because of the comparatively low remuneration. These remarks were made simply because Mr. Triggs was a man for whom he had the highest respect personally, and as a railway accountant. Ever since he (Mr. Johnson) had been a member of Parliament he had taken an interest in the annual report of the Railway Department, and the returns given by the late Chief Accountant were made so easy of comprehension that every layman could follow them without any difficulty and become aware of what the railways were doing. A great amount of credit was due to Mr. Triggs for the simple and understandable way in which the returns were prepared. He also desired to say in connection with the railways that the rela-

tionship to-day between the management and the employees was better than it had been for many years past. He was prepared to admit that even now the minimum wage was altogether too low in comparison with the cost of living, and the wages paid for similar work by outside firms; more particularly was this the case in connection with the wages paid to the workers on the goldfields. There was a system in the Railway Department, which was absolutely unfair, of paying an extra shilling a day as goldfields allowance, a sum of money which did not compensate the workers for the difference in the conditions of work and of the cost of living between the coast and the goldfields. Take mechanics and carpenters principally. He had always complained in Kalgoorlie that the carpenters employed by the railway were underpaid; these tradesmen had been getting as low as 12s. a day, while the men employed outside on exactly similar work were receiving 15s. a day.

The Minister for Railways: But we keep our men regularly employed.

Mr. JOHNSON: The shilling a day which the Government paid as goldfields allowance was not a fair allowance when the difference in the cost of living and the conditions of life there were taken into consideration. There was a tendency also to transfer married men to the goldfields instead of sending single men. To send a married man up there with a wife and family, and to pay him 1s. a day extra was hardly a reasonable thing. That allowance was certainly not fair compensation for the differences which had been referred to. While, as he had stated, the relations between the employees and the Government were better to-day than they had been for many years, there were still instances where the Government could step in and do greater justice to their employees than was being done, even under the existing conditions, satisfactory as they were to an extent. The Minister referred to the fact that striking an average, the wages of the men were higher to-day by 10d. than they were a few years ago. As the member for North Fremantle had pointed out that did not

mean a great deal. It was admitted that the Government had improved the conditions during the last year or so, but the great difficulty was with regard to the fixing of the minimum and maximum. He was speaking feelingly on this matter, because he was, at the present time, engaged as secretary of the Midland Railway Employees' Union, in conferring with the management on the subject of the scale of wages and the conditions of labour as applying to that railway system. The manager of the Midland railway produced the Government agreement, and stated that he was prepared to pay Government rates. It was impossible, however, to get from that agreement the scale of wages of any particular individual. Taking the gangers, Mr. Smith met him and said, "I will pay the Government rates." The Government minimum was 8s., and the maximum 13s. He remarked to Mr. Smith, "What are you going to pay?" and Mr. Smith replied, "There is the rate of wages paid by the Government." The only answer that could be given to that was that it meant nothing. Mr. Smith was asked whether he was going to pay 8s., and he replied in the negative; and on being asked whether he was going to pay 13s., he again replied in the negative. The minimum and the maximum were so wide apart that friction always arose between the individuals employed and the management. Although there was a system of supposed automatic increases as the result of a review in a given month in certain years, there was a certain amount of favouritism in connection with that matter which did not give satisfaction. It was to be hoped that in future agreements there would not be such a great disparity between the minimum and the maximum; rather should there be a standard rate for a given time, so that the men would know exactly what they would receive for that given period, and then after that it could be reviewed exactly as was done by the Arbitration Court with outside employees.

The Minister for Railways: We do not want compulsory automatic increases.

Mr. JOHNSON: The arbitration court never gave the minimum and maximum wage. For instance, carpenters would not get a minimum and maximum fixed. they

would get a standard fixed; so it should be with the Railway Department. The fact remained that while there was a large number working on the minimum, there were practically none who were engaged on the maximum, and it was that which was causing so much trouble in connection with the management. What he would like to see in the next agreement was the wiping out of the minimum and maximum, and the fixing of a standard rate of pay. The Government should be congratulated in overcoming the difficulty that had arisen between the officers' association and the Commissioner. On the occasion of that difficulty, and on many other occasions the Commissioner showed that he was a little bit too impulsive. A number of us suffered from that same complaint, but it could be seen better in the other fellow than one could see it in oneself. In connection with this matter, the Commissioner noticed through the *Railway Gazette* that it was the intention of the officers to affiliate with the wages staff. Instead of finding out what was the nature of the proposed affiliation, he immediately wrote to them and informed them that he would not permit it, and stated in his letter that he was not concerned about the terms of the affiliation. It was the Commissioner's duty to find out exactly what they proposed to do under that affiliation, and if he had taken the trouble to find out what were the circumstances of that supposed affiliation we would never have had a difficulty, because Mr. Short was a practical man and he would have seen that no objection could have been raised. The public had been led to believe that amalgamation was coming. As a matter of fact when, recently, members of the Opposition had discussed the matter with the Premier and the Minister for Railways, it had been shown that it was proposed that representatives of the two associations should meet to discuss matters of mutual interest, that the affiliation was to be purely advisory; and the Government had then realised that there could be no objection to the proposal, the technical difficulty being overcome by allowing the combination to be recog-

nised as an advisory committee. Then the difficulty of recognition of the officers of the association had followed, and the Commissioner had said, "If you affiliate I will refuse recognition." However, that difficulty had been overcome. The railway officers had been suffering under many grievances for a number of years. Some 18 months ago the subject of these grievances had been discussed with the late Premier, Sir Newton Moore, who arrived at a decision on many points. But the decision given by Sir Newton Moore on that occasion had conveyed to his (Mr. Johnson's) mind a different view altogether from that which had subsequently been taken of it by the Commissioner. In connection with Sunday work, for instance, he (Mr. Johnson) did not think the late Premier had intended that a man should work 12 hours on Sunday.

The Minister for Railways: It was understood the same period would follow.

Mr. JOHNSON: That had not been conveyed at the time, otherwise he would have raised the point that it was unreasonable to work officers such long hours on Sundays.

The Minister for Railways: We agreed that if a man were brought on for only 20 minutes he would get quarter pay.

Mr. JOHNSON: But the point was that there was a difference of opinion as between the officers and the Commissioner with respect to the interpretation to be placed upon the late Premier's decisions. He desired that the Minister should agree to the Commissioner meeting the officers of the association at the earliest possible date. Then we should have no difficulty as to the terms of recognition, and the Commissioner would go into these matters with the officers and endeavour to arrive at an agreement. After all, the men who had the main grievances were those on the salaried staff, and all those grievances would be overcome if the Commissioner would meet the officers' association and discuss the grievances in detail. In his opinion the Commissioner resented the meeting of the officers of the two bodies; but the Commissioner should recognise that

those men were just as anxious for the successful working of the railways as was the Commissioner himself. As far as the union was concerned, the Commissioner was scarcely as free in his intercourse with it as he might be. To-day we had really competent railway men at the head of the officers' association, and of the wages' staff. Mr. Hunt had been a worker in the railways for many years, and had earned a reputation as a competent officer, displaying a keen intelligence in his work. Was it to be expected that in his position as general secretary of the railways association Mr. Hunt would fail to continue to display the same interest in the work of the railways? The point was that when the Commissioner was discussing matters with Mr. Hunt, the official representative of the men, the Commissioner would be discussing these things with a good practical man. And it was to be understood it did not follow that because a man had a grievance that grievance would necessarily be officially placed before the Commissioner. As a matter of fact, the grievance had to be stated to the secretary, who reported to the committee—a committee, by the way, composed of the brightest men on the wages' staff between Midland Junction and Fremantle, and truly representative of the various branches—and there was but little danger of the committee passing any grievance unless it was of a thoroughly genuine character. This being so, it was only reasonable that when the committee accepted a grievance for submission to the Commissioner, the Commissioner should seriously discuss the matter with the union when it was brought under his notice. If this were done it would serve to lessen the work of members of Parliament; because until the Commissioner recognised that it was in the best interests of the management of the railways that a good relationship should exist between the union and the Commissioner, the only way to ventilate these grievances was for members of Parliament to have them discussed in the House. There were one or two little points calling for explanation by the Min-

ister. For instance, there was the alleged carrying of workers from Kurrawang to Doodlakine in a truck labelled "Goods and effects." This had already been ventilated in the House, so there was no occasion to go into details, but he desired that the Minister should return some satisfactory explanation of the circumstance. A very genuine grievance with the railway workers was in connection with the annual increments of junior officers. This also had been ventilated on last year's Estimates, when a promise was given that the anomaly would be rectified. However, that had not been done, and these men were to-day suffering a loss of £10. It was distinctly unfair, and, according to the firm of Messrs. Smith & Lavan, as distinctly illegal. The grievance had been brought under the notice of this firm in May, and the firm had written as follows:—

In reply to your's of the 11th inst., wherein you submit certain questions for my opinion, I have carefully perused your salaried staff regulations and the *Government Gazette* of 29th April, 1910, at page 195, altering, amending, and adding to the former regulations. As to the first question, viz.:—"Are the regulations in any way a contract between Commissioner and officers?" I am of opinion that the regulations are a contract between the Commissioner as such and the officers of the Railway service to whom these regulations respectively relate. I am also of opinion that these regulations can from time to time be altered, amended, or rescinded under Section 23 of the Act and Sub-section 26 of that section as amended by 29 of 1907, provided such amendments, etc., are approved and gazetted as required by Section 24 (1) of the Act. In other words an officer in entering the employment of the Commissioner does so on the understanding that he must conform to the then regulations in force and also to any future regulation made from time to time. and the Commissioner on his part is in like manner also bound. As to question 2, viz.:—*Re* clause (G), regulation 26, can the Commissioner suspend pay-

ment of automatic £10 increments provided for by this clause when there is no general suspension of increases and finances are good?"

That is dealing directly with annual increments. This legal gentleman replies—

I am of opinion that the Commissioner cannot suspend—

If the Minister was not going to follow this matter and was not going to reply, he would take the opportunity of dealing with it exhaustively on the items. This was an item of burning interest, and if the Minister was not going to take an interest in it when he was trying to put it briefly, he would see that it was thoroughly ventilated on the items. Hon. members when speaking should receive some consideration.

The Minister for Railways: I am being asked some questions by the member for Swan.

Mr. JOHNSON: The member for Swan should defer his questions until a time when members were not asking for the attention of the Committee. The reply of the legal authority had been—

I am of opinion that the Commissioner cannot suspend the operation of this clause unless he does so on the ground of want of efficiency, or under and for the reasons contained in regulation 26, clause (J). I think the clear intention of this clause is to offer to the junior officers of the 9th and 10th classes special inducements to make themselves efficient within the meaning of the word as defined in clause (G) and when an officer carries out the conditions as to efficiency he has at once earned and become entitled to the increments thereby promised. Such increments can only be taken away under clause (J) and I am further of opinion that clause (J) can only be made use of by the Commissioner under "a general suspension of the classification advances." In other words the Commissioner cannot single out a particular officer or a particular class and suspend the advances to which the particular officer or class are entitled. It must be a general suspension and such suspension must be rendered neces-

sary by the financial exigencies of the departments.

That was the opinion of a qualified firm who said distinctly that from the legal point of view these increments could not have been stopped and that the junior officers were justly and legally entitled to them. When the matter had been ventilated last year the Minister had promised that it would be rectified, but what the department had done had been to pay the increments for 1909-10, but not the increments that were due for 1908-9, with the result that these officers had lost £20 and would continue to lose it. It would be perpetual unless the Government stepped in, as they should do from a legal point of view and from a consideration of honesty. It had been an honest contract and there had been no right to suspend it. He sincerely trusted that now the railway finances were in such a flourishing condition the grievances of the junior officers would be rectified.

The Minister for Railways: I doubled it last year and this year we are bringing in regulations giving further increases.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was to be hoped that the £10 would be paid.

The Minister for Railways: I told you last year that it would not be paid, but I want to make an amendment now for increases generally.

Mr. JOHNSON: When the Minister was making these amendments would he take into consideration the fact that these men had already lost £10? If that were done the reflection which could be cast on the Ministry would be removed.

The Minister for Railways: I doubled it last year for that purpose.

Mr. JOHNSON: But the officers were still £10 out of pocket and it was to get that amount that they were agitating. He hoped that the Minister would pay the amount that was due, and if not, that he would remember when he was amending the regulations that those men had lost, or been robbed of, £10, and that he would give some compensating advantage on that account. Dealing with the workshops, he was bound to admit that like other branches of the railways the workshops had improved from the employees' point of view. That was largely due to the fact

that the Government had granted some of the increases that the employees were entitled to under the regulation that provided for automatic increases, but there was a vast number of employees who felt that they had not got justice in the review which had taken place, because while a number had received increases others had been denied. He was not one of those who urged the continuance of the annual automatic increases: he believed that the main guide for the payment of increases should be efficiency and special ability. Length of service alone could not give a right to an increased salary. There was a number of men in the Railway Department who disagreed with him on that point, but he maintained that we would have greater disadvantages if we had annual automatic increases based on length of service than we had to-day when that principle was not fully in operation.

The Minister for Railways: There would be no incentive to good work.

Mr. JOHNSON: That was so, and while he was prepared to admit that the annual increment was not sound in practice, still the system that was adopted by the management now of having an annual review was altogether unsatisfactory. By the annual review they permitted heads of departments the power of specially remunerating particular favourites. As a matter of fact he was in a position to say that that had applied in one or two cases, and he knew one such instance in the Government workshops. There were instances where men had made themselves very objectionable so far as the union was concerned—men who would not join the union and who boasted to their superior officers that they did not belong to the union and would not join it. He knew of the case of an officer who was not an highly skilled man and who had no special qualifications, but who, whenever the increments came round, was specially remunerated, simply because he made himself particularly objectionable to the unionists, served on Mr. Hedge's committee, and crawled and cringed before the chiefs of the department.

The Minister for Railways: Have you ever noticed any intolerance on the part of the Chief Mechanical Engineer.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was not Mr. Hume to whom reference was being made. But that gentleman was only too anxious to take the recommendations of the heads of branches, and did not investigate them. Some years ago when certain statements had been made, Mr. Hume had come to Parliament House, and in company with the Minister and himself (Mr. Johnson) one or two cases had been discussed and the Minister had advised him to go to the workshops and look through the files. He had done so and had found that in every case where the Chief Mechanical Engineer had investigated the matter himself, there had not been the slightest thing to object to; in fact, Mr. Hume was highly qualified to make these comparisons and give decisions, but the difficulty to-day was that he tried to avoid it and that the recommendation made by the employee's immediate superior was promptly endorsed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer without any personal investigation. To return to the other point, what he wanted to emphasise was that while he was opposed to annual increments, he believed that increases should be given and reviews should be made, but that the Government should introduce some appeal board before which an officer would have an opportunity of ventilating any grievance against a decision given in regard to increases. The trouble to-day was that anomalies existed in the workshops, but there was no method of redress except for the person aggrieved to report the matter to the union and the union to take it up with the Commissioner. That was not a desirable procedure and it would be more satisfactory to the men concerned, to the department, to the union and to members of Parliament if an appeal board were brought into existence to deal with any genuine grievances that might exist. He believed that if the Minister would say that the increases should not be automatic but that an annual review should take place and from the decisions arrived at there should be an appeal, there would be smoother working in the workshops. He was glad to say that as a result of ventilating the matter in the House on a previous occasion, the employment of boys in the work-

shops had been reduced to a great extent, but there was one department where boys should not be employed at all, and that was in connection with the driving of the steam hammers. So far as his knowledge went boys were not employed in the big engineering shops in outside firms for driving and working the steam hammer, neither were they so employed in the Government workshops in the Eastern States, but in the Midland Junction workshops boys were doing that very work to-day. It was distinctly unsafe and not fair to the mechanics working about the hammer. Moreover it had a tendency to reduce wages and to introduce a system of paying boys' wages where men should be employed. Consequently he trusted that the hammers would be taken out of the hands of the boys and put in charge of competent men, and thus made more safe for the mechanics working around them. Another matter that had already been brought under the notice of the Minister was the dismissal of a striker named Phillips. The Minister had refused to interfere in that matter, and in taking that attitude had been not altogether fair to the employee who had been dismissed.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr. JOHNSON: The case was a genuine one of a grievance, but it also dealt with a principle, and it was brought forward because it should not be taken as a precedent to be used against other employees of the department. Phillips started work on the 6th February, 1909, and received notice that his services were no longer required on the 1st March, 1910, after being nearly 13 months in the service, yet his appeal to the appeal board was dismissed, the chairman ruling that he was not a permanent employee, though one of the rules governing appeals was that the right of appeal applied to all permanent employees, and that men in the employ of the department for over 12 months continuously were permanent employees. Phillips was more than 12 months in the employ of the department and, therefore, was unfairly treated by the decision of the chairman of the ap-

peal board. Phillips was a particularly good employee and a competent man, and numerous blacksmiths under whom he worked were prepared to testify to his capabilities. But for some reason Phillips did not please his foreman. The foreman had a grievance against Phillips and had satisfaction in dismissing him. When Phillips notified the department of his intention to appeal, the foreman conveyed to him that if the appeal was withdrawn he would be reinstated on the casual list. This was an indication that the man must have been competent. Feeling there was a reflection cast upon his abilities, Phillips refused to withdraw his appeal, and the other employees urged him to go on with it because there was a principle at stake. Before the case went to the appeal board the foreman altered the charge to read that Phillips was an unsatisfactory workman, but that could not have been the case otherwise the foreman would not have offered to reinstate Phillips as a casual hand if the appeal was withdrawn. However, Phillips was denied the right of appeal, and though the union appealed to the Commissioner the department absolutely refused to take any action. Not only was the employee unjustly treated, but it was interfering with a precedent that would work against the employees generally. While it was true that in a number of cases the maximum on the wages staff had been increased, as the Minister had indicated, the responsibilities on the men receiving the increases were added to beyond the value of the additional wage. In other words, a man was given 6d. a day increase and given more responsibility to the extent of 1s. or 1s. 6d. a day, and this was done by simply altering the wording of the agreement, placing the men in different positions from those mentioned in the agreement. For instance, when the retrenchment came along electrical linemen engaged as gangers or foremen-in-charge of districts, were reduced to ordinary linemen, but when districts were brought into existence again others were brought in and given positions to which the reduced hands should have been reinstated. There were occa-

sions on which these electrical gangers were in charge of parties and sometimes they worked by themselves. When they were reduced to ordinary linemen they still did the same work but were not called gangers. When things prospered and there was an effort made to have the linemen placed in charge of districts and given pay in accordance with the payment previously given to gangers, the request was avoided by these men not being called gangers, for whom there was a higher wage fixed in the agreement. The men were called upon to take the responsibilities of electrical gangers but they did not get the pay. The work they undertook was of a most dangerous character and because of the risky nature of the calling it was unfair to class them down at 8s. a day minimum. Not only this, but linemen were called upon to take charge of districts and not given the title of gangers, and were refused the pay attaching to the responsibility they took. We found the same system prevailing in connection with the examiners. These examiners previously were in charge of particular centres and were receiving a good rate of pay, and during the time of retrenchment they suffered reduction. Now we found, as the traffic had increased other men were put on, and these men who had previously carried out the work, men who had been trained to it, were denied the positions. That was distinctly unfair. These men had held the positions and were recognised to have the necessary ability to carry out the work, and yet when prosperity returned they were denied the promotion which should certainly have been theirs. It was expected that the Minister would say that the department put on mechanics because certain repairs were necessary which required the supervision of mechanics; that, however, did not apply always. For instance, a competent mechanic had been brought to Perth where previously an examiner was in charge; the man who had done the work previously surely was competent to do it again, but his claims were overlooked and a mechanic was brought in. When a protest was entered the examiners were in-

formed that it was necessary to put on mechanics owing to the number of repairs. That might be all right as applied to Perth, but it did not apply to other depots. It was found that at Northam exactly the same thing had been done as well as in other cases, like those of the electrical linemen, who were taking on extra responsibilities but were not getting the rate of pay which should be attached to the positions. Then there was the matter of relaying. Relaying was plate laying, and what was the department doing? Again the department were introducing a system which one was justified in calling a sweating system; they were using fettlers, who would receive 8s. a day to do the plate laying work which carried a higher rate of payment.

The Minister for Railways: They are interviewing the Commissioner about it this afternoon.

Mr. JOHNSON: That, however, would not debar the ventilation of the matter in Parliament. It had been going on for some time, and with the decision to extend relaying, a policy which he absolutely endorsed and was pleased to see the Commissioner carrying out, it was found that this sort of thing would increase in proportion. It was unfair because plate-laying required special skill, and if a fettler was called upon to do the work he should get the rate of payment attached to that work, or the Commissioner would not be working in accordance with the agreement. Then, again, with regard to ticket examiners, exactly the same thing was being done. Junior porters were being put on as ticket examiners, men who, owing to want of service were not skilled in this particular line of work.

The Minister for Railways: You must give a little and take a little.

Mr. JOHNSON: While prepared to do that, it was all give as far as this system was concerned and no take. The policy seemed to be general in the department, and it was a system which seemed to have been introduced with a desire to undermine the working conditions and to get away from working under the industrial agreement which existed. It was true to-

day that there were ticket examiners, but they were not doing that work, they were doing other work, and junior porters at 7s. 6d. a day were examining tickets. Speaking from experience, he knew that a large number of ex-tramway employees were ticket examiners, and these men had been in the department for only a few months. It was admitted that they were highly competent and intelligent men, and it was pleasing to see that the Railway Department had brains enough to take over these competent men, who refused to work for the tramway company, by whom they were so disgracefully treated. Out of 120 men who ceased work on the tramways, half of that number had left the service and a big proportion had joined the Government service, and for the sake of the State he (Mr. Johnson) was proud to know that the best of these men had gone into the working railways. A number of these men were to be found ticket examining, and it was known that they could not possess the requisite knowledge to make successful ticket examiners.

The Minister for Railways: They will have to learn.

Mr. JOHNSON: But while they were learning they were suffering, because if they made any mistake in connection with fares the amount was deducted from their wages, and if they made a mistake on the other side the Government stuck to it. If we were going to teach a man it would be unfair to penalise him while he was being taught.

The Minister for Railways: He may become careless.

Mr. JOHNSON: While not urging that these men should get an increased rate, he claimed that as the agreement set out that a ticket examiner should receive a certain remuneration, that ticket examiner should get it whether he was qualified or not. The remedy was that we should have qualified men. There seemed to be a growing inclination on the part of the Commissioner to use tactics of that description to reduce the rate of wages. It was true that the Commissioner was giving a little, but on the other hand he was taking it away in many cases a hundred-fold by increased responsibilities. This

could not go on without a vigorous protest being entered, and the matter was brought under the notice of the Minister so that serious trouble might be prevented. The Minister might say, if it was wrong, why not bring it before the Arbitration Court as a breach, but it was not for the State's servants to go perpetually before the Arbitration Court with a grievance. It should not be the desire of the Commissioner to undermine the working agreement, but to put on it a liberal interpretation, and it was to be hoped that the Minister would look into these matters and see whether they could be rectified. If the Commissioner did not do so in the case of the plate-layers the Minister should see that justice was done to them. It was his desire also to make an appeal on behalf of those workers who had been transferred to the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe railway. There was a system, as everyone knew, of granting annual holidays, but the worker at Hopetoun was particularly penalised, inasmuch as he could not take his holiday at Hopetoun. That employee might desire to come to the City, but the holiday was made to start at Hopetoun, and he had to wait there until a boat could convey him to Albany. The Minister should consider the advisability of allowing the holiday to start at Albany instead of at Hopetoun, and, in addition, that he should pay the employee's boat fares. The privileges given down there were not the same as the privileges which were given to the workers in Perth or at other places where they could avail themselves of the railway. There was another matter, and then he would conclude his speech. The question was brought up in connection with the no-confidence debate, namely, the practice of transferring employees, married men particularly, to Merredin and to the goldfields. The Minister in reply to a question which was asked him in the House, said that it was not a condition of employment that officers had to go to the goldfields or to Merredin when called upon to do so. That, however, had been the practice, and numerous employees had been notified that unless they removed to these centres promotion would be denied

them for a given term. Why had the married men protested against going to Merredin? Because it was utterly impossible to take a wife and family there; it would entail the keeping of two homes; or the separation of an employee from his wife and children. There was absolutely no accommodation at Merredin, and the department should endeavour to the utmost to send single men there rather than married men. He knew of one or two employees who had taken their wives and families to Northam as being the nearest practical point to Merredin, and had themselves gone to Merredin to work, merely putting in the week end with their families. If, under these conditions, an employee protested against the cost of keeping two homes he was told he would be denied promotion. If the Government intended to continue this policy of forcing married men to go to Merredin they should take into consideration the building of homes at that place for these men. The same thing applied in regard to the goldfields. The goldfields were not, as a rule, desirable places to which to take one's wife and family, and yet the practice in the Railway Department was to transfer married men to the goldfields by way of promotion. And, as in the case of Merredin, if a man thus transferred protested, he was told he would not get his promotion. In reply to questions asked the Minister had said this was not so; but he (Mr. Johnson) would retort that it was so. He trusted that the Minister would make further inquiries with a view to possible remedy. He was pleased indeed that the Government had at last recognised the special abilities of the two chief officers in the railway workshops. The Chief Mechanical Engineer had received an increase of £100, and not a day too soon. The Chief Mechanical Engineer was well deserving of this increase.

The Minister for Railways: He got it last year, not this year.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, it was still more satisfactory to know that the offi-

cer had received it a year earlier. Both the Chief Mechanical Engineer and the works manager were highly qualified officers, and the condition of the workshops might be taken as a proof of this; because, having regard to the number of men there employed, the grievances were very few indeed. It was gratifying to know that the men having control of this huge concern were being recognised as worthy of special consideration. The salary of the Chief Mechanical Engineer ought to be at least £1,000. He was pleased to see that the main asset of the State had progressed to the extent it had during the past few years. He trusted the good feeling between the management and the employees would continue, and that the railways themselves would maintain the enviable position they enjoyed in Australia as being the best managed and the least liable to accidents.

Mr. ANGWIN: A branch of the department which claimed special attention was the stores. A week or two ago in reply to a question the Minister had said that if it was desired to see the report of the stores branch the hon. member could move to have it placed on the Table. However, it should not be necessary for members to move in the matter. The report had since been prepared, but was withheld from hon. members until to-day, when the Minister had read it out. This mere reading of it by the Minister did not give hon. members an opportunity of studying it to see if it was strictly in accordance with the balance sheet. In 1909 he had drawn the attention of the Minister to a deficiency in regard to the stores, and the Minister had promised to make inquiries into the matter. What he (Mr. Angwin) had then said was reported in *Hansard* as follows:—

There was between the amount of stock shown as being in hand in 1907 and the amount in hand in 1908 a difference of about £55,300. It was a large amount, and in view of that some information should be given to hon. members in explanation of the discrepancy. The balance sheet of

1906-7 had shown stores to the value of £244,475 as being in hand. During the year the storekeeper reported that he had received by purchase from the Agent General, from the Eastern States, and from local supplies, stores to the value of £311,259, and had issued stores to the value of £347,363, which according to the stock and the value of the stores purchased and issued, would give on the 30th June £208,371. But the balance sheet showed stock to the value of £263,716. On making inquiries he had found that these were stores manufactured at the workshops, together with returns not included in the storekeeper's report. He thought that if the storekeeper was purchasing manufactured goods from the workshops he ought to render them in his report as stores received. Hon. members would then be able to see where this large quantity of stores came from and where it had been purchased. In the year 1905-6 there had been a difference of £54,000 in these stores; in 1906-7 a difference of £109,000, and in 1907-8, £55,300. He hoped that in future the Minister would see that these stores were included in the amount shown as stores purchased.

The Minister had then promised that in future the balance sheet would be duly presented to the House. Certainly there should have been some explanation in regard to these large discrepancies. The balance sheet of the following year showed the stores in stock to include material in the course of manufacture. This had been done previously. On looking into the matter last year he had found that in June 1908 there were stores in stock to the value of £263,716, while the stores received were of a value of £221,621, making a total of £485,337. Then there had been stores issued to the value of £283,824, while the total in stock was £201,513; but the balance sheet had shown that there was stores in stock to the value of £212,791. However, this was a great improvement, showing as it did that the discrepancy had fallen from £50,000 to £12,000. The ex-

planation had been the same as the Minister had given to-day, namely, that these stores had been issued to be manufactured, which set up the difference for the time being. However, he believed it was the general custom when stores were issued from the stores branch to another department for manufacture, that these stores were charged up to the department to which they were issued, and that after being manufactured the increased cost was added to them. It was necessary that hon. members should know whether the stores account was increasing or decreasing, and he had expected a full explanation in regard to stores in accordance with the promise given last year. But instead of this explanation members had found that the storekeeper's report had been omitted from the Commissioner's report, leaving merely a bald statement as to the value of the stores. In former years it had been customary to give the issues, enabling hon. members to strike a balance and see what should be in stock. In view of the fact that these discrepancies had been shown in the past he felt justified in asking that the Minister should put these reports on the Table. However, the Minister had failed to see his way to do so, and he (Mr. Angwin) was now unable to say whether the Stores Department had rendered their accounts according to the promise made. He resented the action of the Commissioner in keeping back these reports from the hon. members, for it was the duty of the Commissioner to see that hon. members had complete information in regard to the working of the department. It was to be hoped that in future the Minister would see that these reports were duly presented. Last year he had refrained from saying anything, because he had been satisfied that members would get the information they desired, but instead of getting increased information they had been denied it altogether. Together with other hon. members he was pleased that the Railway Department was paying its way in such a satisfactory manner, but it did not always follow that because a concern was making a profit it was being pro-

perly managed. He maintained that in a State such as this, where a big developmental policy was in progress, it might be in the interests of the country if there were a deficit instead of a profit. He was not advocating that that should be so, but was pointing out that while the State might not get a direct advantage from a deficit, it might get it in an indirect manner. In Western Australia the purpose of the railways was to assist in the development of the State, and they were not run for the express purpose of making profits. He hoped that the new railways which the Government proposed would also be brought into existence in the near future, and that they would show by their results that Parliament was justified in approving of their construction. He also hoped that the Government would this year find themselves in a worse position than in the past in regard to the traffic between Midland Junction and Fremantle, for if they did, he was satisfied they would realise the necessity for giving early consideration to the matter of constructing a railway from Fremantle on the south side of the Swan.

Mr. FOULKES: It was of course satisfactory to hear that the revenue of the Railway Department had increased so much during the last few months. We were in the habit of congratulating ourselves that the loan moneys invested in this State were reproductive, but that was only true to a certain extent, and mainly in connection with the Railway Department. The profits of that concern were very largely due to the high freights charged for the carriage of some goods and the heavy passenger traffic, and that meant that the producers were undergoing a certain amount of taxation.

Mr. McDowall: You mean the goldfields?

Mr. FOULKES: The remark applied not only to the goldfields but to the agricultural districts as well. Anyone perusing the table of passenger fares must realise that it was very expensive to travel on the railways on account of the long distances, and he hoped that the Minister would appreciate the fact that there was another

side to the question, namely, that the larger the receipts were the greater was the responsibility on the part of the Government to reduce passenger fares and freights.

Mr. Price: How do our fares compare with the Eastern States?

Mr. FOULKES: It was very difficult indeed to draw a comparison between one State and another. In some States the freights were lower for certain distances, and higher for other distances; but, taking the charges altogether, it seemed to him as a layman that the freights were higher in Western Australia than in the other States.

Mr. Price: How do the passenger fares compare with the other States?

Mr. FOULKES: Again it was difficult to draw comparisons because the people in the other States had not to make such long journeys. Victoria, for instance, was a very small State, and the people did not have to travel long distances, and therefore the burden of travel was not very great. A heavy fare for 100 miles was not so great a burden as a heavy fare for 300 miles.

The Minister for Railways: Compare the populations.

Mr. FOULKES: It was of course owing to the small population of Western Australia that the expenses of the Railway Department were heavier than in the other States. Nevertheless the profits on the railways were large, and were increasing. Even last year, a time of depression, the Railway Department had made a profit of something like £100,000.

The Minister for Railways: £153,000.

Mr. FOULKES: Many people could justifiably ask why should the Railway Department make that profit?

Mr. Price: It is only taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another.

Mr. FOULKES: It was taking the money from one class of people and giving it to another class. In reality it was a form of taxation, and therefore the producers of the country were entitled to a great deal of consideration. The time would come when the people would insist that those who used the railways should not be made to pay more for the conveniences supplied by the system than was

sufficient to pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund.

The Minister for Railways: We were not counting sinking fund when we spoke of the profits.

Mr. FOULKES: Supposing the sinking fund were included, would there not be a profit then?

Mr. Murphy: There would be no profit at all.

Mr. George: Nonsense!

Mr. FOULKES: The member for Murray said that there would be a profit, and he knew at least as much about railways as did the member for Fremantle. The member for Guildford had referred to the fact that each year the State was losing a number of permanent civil servants, and he was reminded of the fact that the Railway Department had recently lost the Comptroller of Accounts, Mr. Triggs, who had held office in the department for the last ten years. Everybody who knew that officer would agree that no civil servant in the country had worked harder and more conscientiously than he had done, but for a long time he had not been satisfied with his position. From copies of correspondence which had passed between Mr. Triggs and the Commissioner in regard to his position, it appeared that in November last Mr. Triggs had accepted an appointment under the Commonwealth at a salary not quite so high as that paid to him in this State by the Railway Department. From a financial point of view the change did not represent promotion, and the fact that an officer would break up his home and go to another State for a lower salary showed that there must be some reason for his doing so. Mr. Triggs in 1906—the dates and statements were subject to correction by the Minister for Railways—undertook fresh responsibilities. At that time there were two officers in charge of two different branches of work, the Audit branch and the Accountancy branch, and when he undertook the responsibility of carrying on the administration of those two offices, he naturally mentioned the question of increased remuneration. It appeared from what Mr. Triggs had stated—and the member for Murray who had been Commissioner of Railways at that

time might correct the statement if it was wrong—that a definite promise had been made by Cabinet that his salary would be increased to £800 per annum, but that promise had not been kept. He believed that the then Commissioner of Railways had definitely promised Mr. Triggs that increase, and it appeared that Mr. Short, who was the next Commissioner of Railways, had realised that there was a certain increase due to Mr. Triggs because in June 1909 he had written to that officer as follows:—

The representations made in your letter of February last have not been lost sight of—

Mr. Triggs must have been reminding the Commissioner in regard to his salary.

nor in a way was it necessary that you should have written me on the subject, for, as I have told you verbally, I am fully alive to the excellent work you have done, and also to the increased responsibilities which now devolve upon you owing to the amalgamation of the audit branch with that of the Chief Accountant. I have made very strong representations to the Government on the subject, but unfortunately the condition of the State's finances would not allow them to give effect to my recommendation. You may rest assured that I shall do everything possible this year to endeavour to obtain for you that which I consider is your due.

In January, 1909, Mr. Short wrote again to Mr. Triggs—

As desired by you, I have to say that in consequence of the death of Mr. Thomas Patterson, late Chief Railway Auditor, I decided that the audit branch should be amalgamated with the Accountant's branch, and be placed under your control. This has been done, and I understand everything is working smoothly. With reference to your salary I made certain recommendations to the Government, which I regret to say they did not see fit to carry out. This is all the more unfortunate, as since my recommendation was made, the amalgamation above referred to has thrown greater responsibility on you. As verbally explained to you, I intend—as soon as the whole of the Estimates are

passed by Parliament—to again urge the Government to give effect to my former recommendations, and I hope I may be successful.

He quoted that correspondence to show that the Commissioner in 1909 had realised the extra work being done by Mr. Triggs, and was also pressing the Government at that time by frequently reminding them of the promise made by Cabinet in 1906 that Mr. Triggs should get an increase to £800 per annum.

The Minister for Railways: Cabinet promised nothing of the sort.

Mr. FOULKES: The statement was made subject to the correction of the Minister.

The Minister for Railways: Cabinet made no such promise: they fixed the maximum of his position at that sum.

Mr. FOULKES: It was all very well to fix a maximum, but he would like to know from the Minister whether a definite promise had not been made to Mr. Triggs that his salary would be increased?

The Minister for Railways: To £800?

Mr. FOULKES: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: No; the maximum of the position was fixed at £800 on the recommendation of the then Commissioner. Last year we gave him an increase from £700 to £750.

Mr. FOULKES: That had been in four years. When Mr. Triggs had accepted the position in 1906, what had been his salary?

The Minister for Railways: I do not know.

Mr. FOULKES: Unfortunately Mr. Triggs was not here, and it was impossible to give the information on that point. At any rate the Minister agreed that Cabinet had decided that the maximum should be £800. That promise and that statement had been made by Cabinet so far back as the year 1906. Mr. Triggs carried on his work in a most satisfactory manner.

The Minister for Railways: He did his work well.

Mr. FOULKES: One would like to know from the Minister when a man was entitled to receive the maximum of his salary.

The Minister for Railways: The Chief Mechanical Engineer was promised at the same time.

Mr. FOULKES: It was no use bringing in others. During the last four years was a time of great stress in the department, and so hard was Mr. Triggs worked that he became seriously ill and yet did not receive his advance. Mr. Triggs maintained he should have been treated more liberally and wrote, "The promise was conveyed to me in writing that the salary would be made up to £800 per annum." The Minister admitted it, and the only point of difference was as to when that salary was to be made up to £800. Mr. Triggs claimed he should be entitled to special consideration because he took over the audit branch in 1908, two years after the promise was made, and contended that this extra responsibility entitled him to extra consideration. In one letter Mr. Triggs said "even if the Government declined to recognise the special work performed he did not think they could morally refuse to honour the promise made to him in 1906, especially when it was remembered that the salary was promised to him prior to its being even contemplated that he should take over the additional responsibility and work of controlling the audit branch for which he had received no extra remuneration, but the result of which was a saving of over £3,000 per annum." At this stage, unfortunately, the Commissioner and Mr. Triggs seemed to have entered into a rather warm correspondence; and on the part of the Commissioner an attempt was made, so Mr. Triggs maintained, to deprive him of the credit of some of the economies effected. At last Mr. Triggs seemed to become disheartened and in November last accepted an appointment to the Commonwealth Government. In announcing to the Commissioner his intention to resign, Mr. Triggs wrote in October and pointed out—"That the whole of his ten years had been a time of strenuous application involving the systematising and reorganising of three important branches of the railway service, accounts, stores, and audit; that the amalgamation and handling of these three

departments resulted in an annual saving of £10,000 per annum; that the additional saving in regard to the locomotive branch of his department was £3,000; that the whole of his organisation schemes had been successfully accomplished; that he had undertaken work directly outside departmental duties, for instance, the administration of the provident and death benefit funds; that in regard to the amalgamation and reorganisation of the different branches he received no monetary consideration; and that he carried on the joint duties for over two years effecting a saving of 30 per cent. in the outlay of salaries alone." Mr. Triggs ended his appeal to the Commissioner by requesting that some special consideration be granted to him for the reorganisation work and special board work carried out by him, as well as for the duties undertaken in connection with the audit branch. He appealed for a grant of accumulated leave. During the ten years Mr. Triggs had not taken advantage of the annual leave and asked that these periods should be accumulated and that he should get the benefit of the accumulation. The Commissioner of Railways replied that so far as annual leave was concerned Mr. Triggs was entitled only to an accumulation of six weeks; but as it was not considered that the conditions which applied to the junior officers should also govern the head of a branch, he was prepared to grant Mr. Triggs payment for accumulated annual leave, less eight and a half weeks Mr. Triggs took out in 1907. It might be well to inform members that in 1907 Mr. Triggs was so seriously ill that his life was despaired of, and this illness was caused entirely through overwork in connection with the duties in the department. Briefly, the Commissioner was prepared to pay for a balance of 12 weeks 4 days' accumulated annual leave in addition to three months' long service leave in accordance with the regulations; and the Commissioner wrote saying Mr. Triggs "would agree that this was a reasonable decision in view of the fact that since October, 1907, he had the misfortune to be absent through sickness for 31½ weeks during which period full pay was allowed." The Commissioner said, "I am unable to

make any allowance outside of the above." It seemed exceedingly shabby on the part of any employer to deduct privileges for sickness when the sickness was caused through extra work and because of the manner in which the officer carried out his work.

The Minister for Railways: They did not do so.

Mr. FOULKES: At any rate, Mr. Short proposed to deduct the amount of leave taken by Mr. Triggs when the latter was seriously ill, and wrote, "I am unable to make any allowance outside the above." Also Mr. Short stated in his letter, "The amount of salary received by you is the maximum the Government were prepared to pay you, notwithstanding my representations on the subject." Evidently Mr. Short did try all these years to get the increased remuneration. Mr. Triggs replied to the Commissioner saying, "He was not in agreement that the decision was a reasonable one; that the reference made to the unfortunate sickness which overtook him during his period of service evidently had been made without a proper knowledge of all the circumstances that brought it about; that it arose from the particularly strenuous conditions with which he was faced on his arrival in the State and up to the time the sickness overtook him; that it was impossible for him to make any headway after he joined the service except by working very long hours day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year; that this alone accounted for his breakdown, of which there was abundant evidence in the department; and that it was ungenerous on the part of the department to put forward this period of absence through sickness as a reason for reducing the consideration which would apparently otherwise have been granted to him." Mr. Triggs asked the Commissioner to forward his letter to the Minister for Railways, and then Mr. Triggs and the Minister came into contact, Mr. Triggs writing to the Minister practically on the same lines as he wrote to the Commissioner, setting out fully his claim for this extra remuneration and also for special consideration. Mr. Triggs worked out a

system of accounts which seemed to be regarded with great favour by professional railway men in all parts of the world.

Mr. Price: What happened when he came into contact with the Minister?

Mr. FOULKES: Mr. Triggs set out his claim fully, and among other things maintained he had prepared a certain system of accounts, and quoted the opinions of others in reference to these accounts. For instance, the Comptroller of Accounts in South Australia said with regard to this work, "You are the first, as far as I can judge, of all the States in the completeness of the work." There were American managers of railways referring to Mr. Triggs' system in the highest terms, and this system had been adopted in the various States. All these facts were made known to the Minister for Railways. In addition to his ordinary duties, it was hard to believe how this gentleman found time to attend to many other matters. Mr. Triggs was a member of the Stores Supply and Tender Board, the Employees Conduct Appeal Board, chairman of Selection Board or Staff Committee, chairman of the W.A.G.R. Death Benefit Voluntary Fund, chairman of the W.A.G.R. Provident Fund, member of the Classification Board appointed to classify the clerical staff, member of the Special Classification Board to assess and classify the various railway stations in Western Australia, and he was also appointed in September last year to act with the Public Service Commissioner and Mr. McGibbon to inquire into the methods of accountancy in the State, and he was next employed by the Commonwealth Government to inquire into the administration of the accountancy branch of the post office. All these facts proved that in Mr. Triggs we seemed to have had an officer of very great ability and also a man who appeared to have devoted long hours to his work, and who appeared to have given every satisfaction. Doubtless Mr. Triggs found it rather painful to put forward the claim that he was ill, and it was hard that the department should try and deduct any term from his

long service leave, and at last he seemed to have lost his temper.

The Minister for Railways: What have we deducted from his long service or accumulated leave?

Mr. FOULKES: Anyway, at the end, matters seemed to have become strained, and what seemed to have annoyed Mr. Triggs was that Mr. Short tried to depreciate his good services. In a letter to the Commissioner Mr. Triggs wrote -

I presume the object of your communication of date is to seek to depreciate the interest that I personally exercised over the economies which were brought about in the audit branch. The fact that no economies in the audit branch had been effected from the time you assumed control of the railways until the death of Mr. Patterson, namely, 17 months, and that the economies that were made resulted after I took control, is a fair answer to such a contention. Moreover, some three years previously (in 1905) of which there is a complete record, I influenced the then Commissioner to endeavour to bring about these self-same economies, but from either the opposition or the lack of interest on the part of some of the important officers of the department, including yourself, the attempt proved futile. The failure to adopt my recommendations is responsible for the loss of some £10,000, and what was possible under my supervision in 1908, was possible in 1905, except for the opposition. I gather that your letter of the 11th instant has been written with the object of ascertaining some information required by the hon. the Minister, and I therefore must ask you to be good enough to forward a copy of your letter, as well as my reply thereto, with any information you may afford him.

The Minister for Railways: You are not reading it all; he claims a lot more there.

Mr. FOULKES: Mr. Triggs did not claim any more than had been mentioned, the only thing Mr. Triggs did was to repeat his claim several times. Then

the Commissioner replied to Mr. Triggs's letter.

The Minister for Railways: Mr. Triggs claims more than you have mentioned.

Mr. FOULKES: Perhaps the Minister would state what claims Mr. Triggs had made.

The Minister for Railways: I have sent for my copy of the correspondence.

Mr. FOULKES: A reply came at once from Mr. Short complaining that this letter was so discourteous that he did not propose to carry on the correspondence any further. In the meantime Mr. Triggs appealed direct to the Minister and no reply was forthcoming, and it had to be borne in mind that Mr. Triggs was due to leave the State on the 22nd November. The Minister must have known this, and yet no reply was sent to Mr. Triggs actually until this unfortunate officer was on board the vessel at Fremantle sailing for Melbourne.

Mr. Collier: He will be a good advertising medium for us when he gets to Melbourne.

Mr. Price: What was the date of his letter to the Commissioner?

Mr. FOULKES: It was sent on the 3rd November and he received the reply on the 22nd, the day of his departure. Mr. Triggs got a reply saying that his communication was so discourteous that it was not the intention of the Commissioner to discuss the matter further with him. That was the answer which he got just as he was sailing for Melbourne. On the 17th November Mr. Triggs wrote to the Commissioner of Railways asking whether he might expect a reply to the communication which he had previously addressed to the Commissioner with reference to certain leave, then Mr. Triggs wrote to the Minister submitting copies of three letters which he had written to the Commissioner and in respect to which he said he failed to have received any acknowledgment or reply. So far Mr. Triggs appeared to have given up all hope of getting a reply, but he had the good fortune and the honour at the very last minute to receive a reply which was as follows:—

Sir,—At your request I forwarded your appeal concerning the question of

what compensation should be paid to you on retirement to Cabinet, who in turn referred the matter to the Crown Law Department. As a result I am advised that a grant of leave cannot be made to a public servant to have effect after his voluntary retirement from the service. Any retiring allowance you may receive must therefore be on the footing of a gratuity, and the question will be duly considered at the next meeting of Cabinet. I have the honour, etc. H. Gregory, Minister for Railways.

It was understood that there were some technical difficulties with regard to giving extra leave to a man resigning the service, but that could be got over in many cases. In the public service it was known that when a man was retiring an arrangement could be made with him to defer formal resignation and allow him to have six months or twelve months' leave before he resigned. At any rate, in the case of Mr. Triggs, this gentleman sent in his resignation early in November, and the reply which he received should be read to the Committee. Here was an officer who had worked very hard for ten years, and on sending in his resignation received a communication in the following terms:—

I have your letter of the 28th instant resigning from the service of this department, which resignation is hereby accepted.

Mr. George: Disgraceful on the part of whoever sent it.

Mr. FOULKES: For his part he would have been ashamed to write an acknowledgment like that to a man who had for so long occupied so prominent a position in the department. It was an axiom among railway officials that once a railway man always a railway man.

Mr. George: Hear, hear.

Mr. Horan: You never were a railway man.

Mr. FOULKES: On one occasion when going Home he had met on the steamer an ex-railway porter who had worked on the Great Northern railway in England, and had subsequently come out to Western Australia, where he also worked as a railway porter; yet when that man arrived

back in England there was a free pass over the Great Northern railway awaiting him. Mr. Triggs had applied for a pass to enable him to travel over the South Australian railways on his way to Melbourne. As a railway official Mr. Triggs had a pass, and had intended to take that pass with him for use at the Adelaide station; but the Railway Department of Western Australia had insisted upon him giving up the pass before leaving, although the department offered to give him a letter asking for a pass over the South Australian railways. This Mr. Triggs had refused point blank. The Committee should remember that these passes did not cost the country anything; they were merely a matter of courtesy between the Railway Departments of the different States. He had brought forward the case with a view to convincing the Committee how dangerous it was for us to treat our servants in this way. It might be contended that £700 was a large sum to pay a railway official, but surely it was very little to pay the head of a branch who had instituted very great economies in the service. The salary was nothing extraordinary, and he regretted very much, indeed, that a grave error of judgment had been committed in allowing this officer to leave the service. Mr. Triggs had written him some very bitter letters with regard to the treatment received at the hands of the department. It had been contended by the department that no leave was ever given after a man had resigned.

Mr. Bolton: That is absolutely incorrect; it is so even in regard to the wages staff.

Mr. FOULKES: Mr. Triggs had stated that so far as the railways were concerned, every wages man and every officer who might have voluntarily resigned had been paid the equivalent of any leave to which he was entitled, and that on the authority of the Commissioner of Railways, without reference to Cabinet, and that probably the Minister for Railways knew that that was the fact. What Mr. Triggs had felt so bitter over was the fact that his case had been referred to Cabinet, and then sent on to the Crown Law Department, the procedure having the appear-

ance of deliberately delaying the giving of a decision until Mr. Triggs should have left the State. It was to be hoped the Minister would be able to state another side to the case. For his (Mr. Foulkes) part, he had honestly tried to place both sides before the Committee. Judging from the correspondence which he had briefly outlined one could not shut one's eyes to the fact that a cruel piece of injustice had been perpetrated.

Mr. GEORGE: It was, perhaps, due that he should explain his attitude in connection with the question of railways since he had rejoined this Chamber. Hon. members would agree that except in such cases in which, to his mind, there had been a misconception as to what was due to employees, he had refrained from offering criticism either upon the administration or the carrying out of the work of the department. He had refrained, feeling that, as a matter of duty to the country and also to himself, any criticism he might give should be calmly and carefully considered, and should be put forward without the appearance of prejudice or personal feeling. It was very difficult, as the Committee would agree, for anyone who had passed through five years of strenuous work in connection with the railways, to avoid feeling that, perhaps, his claims for recognition or consideration had not been as fairly dealt with as he could wish. When he had stood for election against the late Mr. Edward McLarty he had told his constituents—and he had kept his word—that it was not his intention to make this Chamber a vehicle for the airing of any grievances, or to use his position for the purpose of getting even with those who, he considered, had not treated him decently. Hon. members, and the Press if it chose to be fair, would bear him out in this claim that he had carefully kept himself within bounds in respect to these matters. He had also felt that the position of Commissioner of Railways was hedged around with so many restrictions, and the Commissioner himself was faced with so many perplexing duties, that it should be the duty of members of the House to assist that officer in their criticism rather than endeavour to humiliate

him, or to in any way interfere with his work. Feeling that, and having regard to his pledge to his constituents, he had maintained an attitude of silence with regard to the railways. Although he had not heard the speech of the Minister this afternoon, yet he had heard several members on the other side, and also the member for Claremont, and in connection with the conditions which were applied to both the wages men and the salaried staff, he felt that whatever might have been the traditions of the department in the past, whatever the motives at the root of the men's actions, the times called for this: that in dealing with these men, wages or salaried, absolute fair play in connection with their conditions of employment and the rates of wages was required, not merely as an act of justice, but also in the interests of the satisfactory carrying on of the work. If there was allowed to grow up and continue among the men, whether salaried or wages, a feeling that they were not being dealt with according to the spirit of the times, then it would be bad for the management of the railways, bad for the conduct of the work of the department, and, certainly, against the interests of the country. Reference had been made by the member for Guildford to the conditions applying to wages employees. He did not propose to go into those conditions, because it should be absolutely unnecessary for matters of that sort to come within the Chamber. If the representatives of the men and the heads of the Railway Department themselves could not decide such questions without reference to the Chamber, then something seriously required attention from the supreme chief; and seeing that the Commissioner of Railways was, by Act of Parliament, entrusted with the control and management of his officers and men, it should not be beyond the scope of his operations to settle those matters without reference to the Chamber. Perhaps more than any other member in the Chamber he had had to do with the difficulties both with regard to wages men and the salaried staff of the Railway Department; he had gone through thousands of different cases and settled many of them before they reached the appeal court.

The older he got and the more he moved about the more firmly of opinion was he that there should not be any necessity, in dealing with employees of the Railway Department, to have recourse even to the arbitration court. If on both sides there could be a little mutual give and take, all real difficulties would vanish and the path would be smoothed without reference to the Chamber. He wished to deprecate the reference to the Minister of matters dealing with either wages or salaries. Under the Act the Commissioner had sufficient power to deal with them. It was the Commissioner's right by Act of Parliament, and there should be no opportunity for the Minister to interfere in the management and internal conditions of that great department.

The Minister for Railways: The Act is very clear on that point.

Mr. GEORGE: There were two questions to which he would refer, one being in reference to the cadet system. Under the regulations which he, when Commissioner, had brought up, and which were law to-day, a boy entered the service at £40 a year, and until he reached £150 a year, he was to receive an annual increment of £10 per year. There was no power then and no power to-day which could honestly take that £10 from those boys. If the Government last year, or this year, or in any other year had desired to alter that, they could have done it by the simple course of altering the regulations and gazetting the alteration. But those regulations had to be laid on the Table of the House, and were open for members to discuss them when the Chamber reassembled; but until that course was taken no Government had any right to take from those men who were practically apprentices to the department the increment which the terms of the apprenticeship had laid down. The basis he had had in view was that if a boy entered the service at 15 years of age, he would by annual increments reach £150 at 25 years of age, and if he was not worth that sum at 25 years of age it spoke very ill indeed for those who were overseeing him, because he should have been put out of the depart-

ment earlier. If a boy was apprenticed to a trade, by the time he was 25 years of age he should be getting £3 a week, or more than that. In the trade to which he (Mr. George) belonged, he would be getting about £3 10s., and when it required the same application and the same decency of conduct in the Railway Department, should it not be possible for these youths to be trained up and properly appreciated? The difficulty found all over the world in railway services, in England, America, and Australia, was to get men who would commence at the bottom rung of the ladder and grow up with the service to take the leading positions in it. The fact was that during the last few years a great number of the young fellows had left the service. They had other positions to go to, or they despaired of promotion, or for other of various reasons they had left the service; but whatever the reason, he was satisfied that the doing away with the annual increment to those cadets was not well considered. From his own point of view it was unwise, and he knew that it was unjust, and last year when he had brought it before the House the promise had been given by the then Premier that the cadets should be put on their proper footing.

Mr. Angwin called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung, and a quorum formed.

Mr. GEORGE: The then Premier, Sir Newton Moore, had made a promise—and he had never been known as a promise breaker—that the matter of the cadets should be put right, but he was given to understand, and he believed he was correctly informed, that that promise had not been carried out. It had been partially carried out, but it ought to have been fully carried out, and his object in speaking was to point out to the Committee, and if necessary to ask the Committee, to vote with him on the question, that the matter should be put right as if the former order had never been given. This was the position as it appeared to him. Four years ago a cadet might have been getting £100, and be entitled to £10 increase; but did not get it. Next

year he should have been getting £120, but he might have been given £110. He had lost £10, and that loss was cumulative. It might not be only £10; it might be £50, or £60.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister could not get away from the fact that whether it was £50 or £60 or only £10 was altogether immaterial.

The Minister for Railways: It is not cumulative.

Mr. GEORGE: If four years ago a cadet was at £100, and next year he got £110, and next year again £120, and next year £130, and this year £140, he would have received £100 in increments. But if he were not given the increment in the first of the four years, how much would he have lost? It was useless to say that he had only lost £10; he had lost £10 for every year.

The Minister for Railways: No; after the second year we doubled the increase so that he lost only £10.

Mr. GEORGE: If it was only £10 that was lost to the man, it was his due, and he could have sued the department for it. If he (Mr. George) had been called as a witness, he would have given evidence in exactly the same way as he was speaking before the Committee to-day, and despite what might be said against him, he believed that the bench would take his word. If there was an agreement with people it could not be departed from without mutual consent. The agreement with these youngsters was that they should enter the department at £40, and have annual increments until they got to £150, and unless they were agreeable to that being departed from, it could only be broken with legal consequences. But was it worthy of a big country, and was it worthy of the revenue of the Railway Department alone, that the Government should take £10 from a few cadets? Anybody who looked into the matter would say, "Even if you are hard up, carry out your obligations, even though you should have to pawn your coat." A number of these cadets had left the service, and they had never been paid the amount due to them. The

view taken by the department was that they had left the service, good riddance! If they had died their people were entitled to what had been agreed to be given to them when they had entered the service, and if they had left the service and the department owed them that money they should be paid, and no casuistry and no opinion of the Crown Law Department could get away from the fact that the agreement had been broken and wrongfully broken. The late Premier had promised that it would be put right, and if it had not been put right the fault was not his.

The Minister for Railways: We have no record of any promise.

Mr. GEORGE: The late Premier had made him that promise at the time when there was trouble in progress, and he was doing his best to throw oil on the troubled waters, and avoid the industrial strife that seemed to be likely to happen.

Mr. Gill: It was the night of the fire at the Midland workshops.

Mr. GEORGE: It was hardly necessary to refer to Sir Newton Moore, but if he were in the Chamber he would confirm the statement that had been made. The other matter to which he wished to refer had been dealt with by the member for Caremont, who, however, in going through the papers, had made a slight error when he stated that the sick leave taken by Mr. Triggs had been deducted from his accumulated leave.

Mr. Foulkes: I quoted from the report.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member had been in error because that was not the position. What Mr. Short had said in his letter of 1st November was—

I am prepared to grant you payment for accumulated annual leave less eight and a-half weeks that you took out in 1907, and which leaves a balance of twelve weeks four days to be paid for, and in addition three months' long service leave in accordance with the above-mentioned regulations. I think you will agree that this is a reasonable decision in view of the fact that since October, 1907, you have had the misfortune to be absent through sickness

for thirty-one and a-half weeks, during which period full pay was allowed you. There had been no proposition to deduct that 31½ weeks, but the member for Claremont might easily have been misled. The Commissioner of Railways under the powers granted to him, if they were the same powers as he (Mr. George) had had when he was Commissioner, had a right to deal with the whole of his officers, and on the 1st of November he had said: "I am prepared to grant you payment in lieu of certain leave under the above regulations." If he took the view that he could do that in accordance with the regulations, it was useless and wrong for the Crown Law Department, and perhaps not quite wise on the part of the Minister, to set up the regulations as a bar to that leave which was due, because the Commissioner had distinctly said in that letter that he was prepared to pay in accordance with the above-mentioned regulations. So that any suggestion to refer the matter to the Crown Law Department must have come from the Commissioner of Railways, when, perhaps, for some reason or other he might have changed his mind, or possibly the Minister had desired to see how the Government stood. But, whatever the Crown Law Department might have advised, it was impolitic that such a decision should have been acted upon and certainly that it should have been communicated to Mr. Triggs, because there was the understanding laid down by the Commissioner that he was prepared to pay in accordance with the regulations.

The Minister for Railways: He appealed against that and I referred it to Cabinet.

MR. GEORGE: The appeal to the Minister was for extra consideration to which the Minister could fairly well consider Mr. Triggs was absolutely entitled, yet Mr. Triggs was allowed to leave the State with a letter handed to him at the gangway of the boat on his departure telling him he could not have it. What was at the bottom of it? Was this the way our responsible officers were to be treated? Was there any question of lack of work, lack of integrity, lack of fulfil-

ment of duty? Nothing of the sort. But because Mr. Triggs in a letter to the Commissioner gave vent to some of his indignation he was supposed to be an insolent servant, and that was his reply. There was no such thing as putting the gag on an officer sticking up for his rights. Surely it was not necessary for a public servant to appeal to the law courts to get rights which were plainly in the regulations. It was idle for such a contention to be put forward. No doubt Mr. Triggs would be paid for the leave laid down in the regulations. The only regret was he was allowed to leave the State without first being paid. Mr. Triggs wrote to the Minister on the 3rd November, but it was not until the 22nd November the reply was given, showing that Mr. Triggs was not treated fairly. One could not speak about the necessity for calling a Cabinet meeting, but in business circles when there was no opportunity to call a meeting of a board of directors for an urgent matter the point was settled right out by seeing the directors individually. When he (Mr. George) entered the railway service, it did not take him long to see that, unless he could get the accounts reformed and brought into something of the nature of those of a business concern, he would be landed in a mess and the country in a fool's paradise; but he found he had certain material which was not as pliable or as ready to meet his wishes as he desired. After various troubles the opportunity came and Mr. Toppin was appointed Auditor General, and he then sent for the man he wanted, Mr. Triggs, and satisfied himself that Mr. Triggs was a thorough accountant in every shape and form, and a thorough business man. In fact, he found in Mr. Triggs the man he wanted for the position. He told Mr. Triggs that, although the auditing of the accounts had been separated, it would only be kept separate until Mr. Triggs could give his certificate that the accounts were quite clear and honest and in such a form that they could be laid before any court in Australia and that no man's integrity could be questioned on them. So far as remuneration was concerned there was no power to fix Mr. Triggs's salary, as that

lay with Parliament, but Mr. Triggs was informed that he (Mr. George) held the opinion that the officer in charge of the accounts and audit should be equal to the other heads of the service and receive £1,000 a year. If the work was properly done that salary was not too much. Mr. Triggs received the appointment; and to show the correctness of his, Mr. George's, judgment, Mr. Hudson, one of the Railway Commissioners of Victoria, had said that, had he not known that Western Australia wanted a man like Mr. Triggs, he would have offered Mr. Triggs a much bigger salary to go to Victoria to take charge of the Victorian accounts. A salary of even £1,500 a year was not too high a salary to pay. In London a dozen firms paid their accountants nearer £2,000 a year than £750. People dealing with large sums of money—the railways dealing with about three millions a year besides loan moneys—should have men controlling their accounts with their heads screwed on right, and men whose experience enabled them to avoid making mistakes. Mr. Triggs' salary was gradually raised, and later on a recommendation was sent to the Government with regard to Mr. Triggs and the Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr. Hume. A Cabinet minute came from the Minister to say that the increases could not be given then, but the salaries would be brought up to the amounts recommended as early as possible. That was the wording as far as one could remember. At any rate it was reckoned the advances would be made very quickly. But the advance promised to Mr. Triggs was only for dealing with the accounts of the Railway Department and not for the additional work of controlling the audit work in the department. Mr. Triggs put the railway accounts in proper order and, as the stores accounts were also mixed up, got them straight. Mr. Triggs had also to do with other things, particularly the death fund and the provident fund. If it had not been for his able and loyal assistance the death fund could not have been established in so short a time. It took only three and a half days to get it established, but it was one of the best things ever

done in connection with the service. Not only was it of benefit to the men, but it showed that there was among the officers of the department a desire to treat the men decently. Mr. Triggs had the authority, immediately a death occurred, to send an officer and advance the widow £25 for preliminary expenses; and then when the levy came in there was up to £200, without lawyers' fees and with no delay, as a voluntary offering of practical sympathy to the widow in her distress from the men in the department. There was another good officer in the service, Mr. Julius, who was getting about £500 a year, speaking from memory. He (Mr. George) was not able to make this officer's position any better, although he recognised his high abilities. Circumstances made Mr. Julius feel uncomfortable, not in the Railway Department, but in the State, and he left and stepped into a position at £1,000 a year, and at present was making anything between £2,000 and £2,500 a year. It was idle and utterly unnecessary for members to raise questions as to what responsible officers should or should not receive: the world would pay such men the value of their services when they left the State service. After he (Mr. George) left the department, Mr. Patterson, the Railway Auditor, died, and the office was tacked on to Mr. Triggs, and Mr. Triggs became the man responsible to the Commissioner and to the State for the audit branch. Extra responsibilities were placed on him and these extra responsibilities Mr. Triggs had a right to have recognised.

Mr. Jacoby: And to be paid for.

Mr. GEORGE: The principle involved in this matter should apply all round. If an officer or a wages man resigned, the conditions of his employment should be faithfully fulfilled. It was idle to say that because a man left to better himself that man must necessarily forfeit privileges that would have been his had he remained in the department. When an officer left the State as an honoured servant, when out of a considerable number of applicants he was picked to take a position which was more onerous than his

present position, surely we should not send him out with a brand on his shoulder that we did not appreciate him or with a dirty rag that we could not allow him to have the railway pass to which he was entitled for his years of service. Any boy in the railway service going on holidays obtained from the department a certificate which, presented at any railway office in the world, would give him a free pass over the railways in the country he visited. Hon. members who had belonged to the service knew that members of our service who went to the Eastern States did not pay a penny in railway fares over there. There was no railway man who, whenever he made his position clear, was not extended the courtesy of free transport over the railway systems of the Eastern States. Many years ago in New Zealand, although, according to some hon. members he (Mr. George) was not a railway servant, he was given a free pass there in recognition of the railway work he had done in other parts of the world. With regard to Mr. Triggs' railway pass, it did not matter whether there had been friction between Mr. Triggs and the Commissioner or between Mr. Triggs and the Minister, it was playing it low down to refuse that gentleman a railway pass after 10 years' work, a pass which would be readily granted to him in any part of the world. He (Mr. George) had the honour to hold a life pass on the railways of this State, a pass to which he was entitled according to the rules which held among Commissioners and general managers who had served out their time. If the Government had not given him that pass Western Australia would have been the only country in the world which would have refused anyone placed as he was free transmission over the railways. Practically before he got it, however, he was free of the railways. He had had a free pass over the Midland railways for 20 years, and that pass was still in his possession although he never used it, and as far as the State was concerned, even if he did not have his pass with him for himself or his wife, there would be no difficulty about him travelling. Every railway servant who could show his bona fides would be similarly treated. The late

Mr. Speight had a collection of railway passes which was unique—it numbered fully 60—which had been sent to him on his travels around the world.

Hon. Sir N. J. Moore: You would look well wearing 60 passes.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member might be informed that although gold set off a diamond the diamond, at any rate, lent lustre to the gold. His desire was to point out that if Mr. Triggs had chosen to do so he need not have given up his railway pass, he could have kept it to the last day of the expiration of his leave. The circumstances under which Mr. Triggs had given it up were not known, but if Mr. Triggs did give it up as a matter of courtesy to the Commissioner, the Commissioner might have tendered to him its equivalent, by allowing him a pass, or what was necessary to secure him free transmission on the other side. Mr. Triggs was refused this courtesy by the Commissioner. Mr. Triggs would not go to the Eastern States in *forma pauperis*, but would say straight out that he had left the service in Western Australia, but there was no excuse for allowing him to leave the State without the credentials to which he was entitled. There should be an assurance given by the Minister that for the extra work undertaken by Mr. Triggs the promise that gentleman had, not only from him (Mr. George), which was confirmed afterwards by Cabinet, that his salary would be increased, and seeing also that he undertook another man's work and carried it out, should be fulfilled, and the State would be doing well if it gave Mr. Triggs the gratuity to which he was entitled.

[Mr. Foulkes took the Chair.]

Mr. PRICE: There was no intention on his part to dilate at any length upon the administration of the Railway Department. We had heard a great deal of the injustice which had been done to an ex-employee, and it might be well if the Committee gave some little attention to those who were still in the service.

Mr. Murphy: And not so high up in the service.

Mr. PRICE: The injustice done to Mr. Triggs was admitted, but there were quite a number of men in the service who were suffering under injustices even more severe and more pressing than those under which Mr. Triggs was labouring when he left the service. He referred particularly to those officials who were called upon at small railway centres to carry out the duties which were certainly not railway duties but which were forced upon them by the Commissioner in accordance with certain agreements entered into between the Commissioner and the Commonwealth Government. As long ago as October of last year he (Mr. Price) asked the Minister for Railways some questions on this very subject. They were as to the amount which was due to the Railway Department from the Federal Government for postal work carried out by railway officers from the 1st July to the 30th September, and also what extra remuneration was allowed to the railway officers for the performance of those duties. The Minister's answer was that no special remuneration was given for the purpose of postal duties but any extra work entailed on the officer was taken into consideration when fixing the officers' salaries, and that as a rule officers were provided with assistance where necessary. One would assume from that answer that it was intended to give the impression that wherever railway officers were called upon to perform postal duties they received direct or indirect remuneration for so doing, but like many other answers given by the Minister in this Chamber, this particular one was either intentionally or unintentionally misleading, because it was found that officers were appointed to these small stations, where they had this postal work to attend to, and they were not allowed any extra remuneration nor was the matter taken into consideration when fixing their salaries, nor were they allowed assistance where necessary. He regretted just now that the Minister was not in the Chamber.

The Minister for Works: I am representing him now.

Mr. PRICE: If the Minister for Works with his knowledge of multitudinous matters was *au fait* with everything that was going on in the railway service he would be very pleased to hear it. It was somewhat remarkable that the Minister should go out of the Chamber immediately he (Mr. Price) rose to deal with these particular items. At the present time there were 26 railway stations at which the officers were called upon to carry out the duties pertaining to a postmaster, namely, postal work, telegraphic work, money order work, and Savings Bank work, and in nearly every instance the officers were alone at these particular stations, and the fact might be mentioned that recently at one station, the stationmaster made an application for assistance, pointing out that it was absolutely impossible for him to attend to the many functions pertaining to the Postal Department in addition to his railway work, and considering that he was a railway officer first and a postal officer afterwards, he decided that if any work had to be neglected or if any work should have to stand over it should be the postal work. The result was that he did not give immediate attention to some mails. Complaints were made to the Commissioner of Railways and the officer was called upon to explain why the mail matter was not being attended to; then the officer applied for assistance, and he was told that if he could not do the work somebody would be found who could, and shortly afterwards he was removed to another station. The man who was sent along to relieve had to complain also of the fact that he could not carry out the work, and immediately assistance was given him. In the meantime the Commonwealth Department had taken the matter in hand and decided to open a post office at this particular centre; and there were now two railway officials and the Commonwealth had two postal officers carrying out the work which the Railway Commissioner demanded should be done by one man. Two or three specific instances might be given where this had occurred. At Goomalling one man was in

charge of the railway station and he had to do the postal, money order, savings bank, and telegraphic work. He applied for assistance and it was denied him. His salary was £150 per annum. Soon afterwards the Postal Department decided to open an office, and immediately after they had done so they placed the postmaster in charge at a salary of £220, with an assistant at a salary of £150, to do the work which previously the railway officer had to perform in his spare time in addition to his ordinary work. At Cunderdin the stationmaster, who was also carrying on postal work, had received £160 per annum. The Commonwealth Department opened a post office at that place and put a postmaster in charge at a salary of £170 per annum. At Tambellup, which at the present moment was being taken over by the Postal Department, the stationmaster received £160; a postmistress had now been appointed at the same salary as was received by the railway officer, who had carried out the postal work in addition to his railway duties. And what applied to these three places applied to nearly the whole of the 26 railway stations where dual administration was carried on. Was it any wonder that the railway officers were loud in their complaints when they found that they were compelled to carry out these duties for no extra consideration whatever? As a matter of fact, not only did they receive no consideration for these extra duties, but every little mistake on their part rendered them liable to a fine. It was manifestly unfair. And in every instance they received a lower salary for occupying the dual position than was paid by the Federal Government to the officer who took over one portion only of the duties. Again, it appeared that the Railway Department was using the Commonwealth Postal Department as a sort of bank from which they were levying a supply of ready cash; because in answer to a question asked during the present session, we had been told that the salaries and wages paid for the maintenance of telephone and telegraph lines on our railways amounted to £5,343,

against which the Commonwealth had paid the Railway Department for the maintenance of their lines inside the railway fences £2,158, or nearly half what it had cost the railways in salaries and wages for the maintenance of their lines. Here, then, was the position. Owing to the desire for economy which seemed to actuate the Commissioner in the control of the railway service, we found that faults were continually occurring on our railway telegraph lines. When at Cranbrook last week he had desired to telegraph to Albany, but from the Saturday afternoon until Sunday night, owing to a fault, no communication could be made between the two centres. The reason for this was that over 100 miles of line had to be attended to by two men, with the result that when a fault occurred the repairer had to travel 70 or 80 miles, and this, with a train running only once a day, meant considerable delay and inconvenience. In regard to many of the cases, investigation would serve to place the blame upon the officer at present in charge of the department: this officer was somewhat antiquated in his ideas in regard to the conduct of the service. Between Katanning and Wagin faults were continually occurring through the pig-headedness of the electrical engineer, who insisted upon the wires being placed within eight inches of each other. The result was that wild ducks, which were very plentiful in the district, were continually coming into collision with the wires, as a result of which the wires overlapped and a fault occurred. It was no unusual thing for the lines to be held up for two or three days at a time in that district.

The Minister for Works: We will have to get up a shooting party.

Mr. PRICE: It had been frequently stated that the best of our railway officers were leaving the service to go elsewhere. Undoubtedly there was a shortage of telegraph operators at the present time, particularly in the Commonwealth service, and this being so, one would have expected the Railway Department to do all it could to keep its own operators. But what did we find? In the

central office at Perth the chief telegraph operator received £170 per annum—a man having under his charge 10 other operators.

Mr. Heitmann : Does he own mansions and run racehorses ?

Mr. PRICE : That could scarcely be expected on £170 a year. This gentleman was in charge of 10 operators, each of whom was receiving £150 per annum. On the other hand the lowest paid operator in the Commonwealth service received £180 per annum, or £10 more than the chief operator in our railway service. What could be expected under the circumstances ?

Mr. Walker : Emigration.

Mr. PRICE : In the near future we would find the service strangled through this false economy on the part of the departmental head. The chief operator was receiving £170 and the ordinary operators £150, while the lady in charge of the post office at the Perth railway station, a lady in the service of the Commonwealth, and whose duties were merely to receive telegrams and sell stamps, calling therefore, for no special expert knowledge, was in receipt of a salary of £162. In other words, the lady who took the telegrams over the counter received £12 more than the operators who despatched the messages.

Mr. Heitmann : The lady is also an efficient operator, or she would not have the position.

Mr. PRICE : The lady might be qualified to act as Postmaster-General ; all he was claiming was that her actual duties did not call for special expert knowledge, notwithstanding which she received £12 more than the telegraph operators. He sincerely hoped the Railway Commissioner would take steps to alter the existing conditions in connection with the telegraph operators, and those railway officers who were called upon to perform postal duties ; for the performance of those postal duties those men should receive some special consideration over and above their salaries as railway servants. In New South Wales the Railway Commissioner had under consideration an application for

the payment of £30 per annum extra to all officers performing postal duties. If £30 was regarded as a fair rate for New South Wales, surely our officers should be entitled to an even larger sum. Unless something was done the day would not be long in coming when the railway service would find itself without an efficient telegraph operator. Some of the best heads of departments were drifting out of the service and this was not altogether peculiar to the Railway Department. We should urge upon those in charge the necessity for making immediate alterations.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE : The Minister for Railways had already been reminded that at Bunbury there was a considerable amount of congestion on the railways, and he had promised to bring the matter under the notice of the proper authorities with the object of having the disabilities, under which the people there had laboured, removed. He joined with other hon. members in congratulating the Minister for Railways on the improved prospects of the railway system generally. At the same time it must be recognised that the estimates of revenue were on a decidedly conservative basis. The Minister's estimate, he understood, was that there would be a total increase of £106,603 for the year, whereas during the first four months of the current financial year the increase had been £81,000 compared with the corresponding four months of the previous year, while last month's operations alone had resulted in an increase of from £20,000 to £30,000. Thus up to date the estimated increase of £106,000 had been practically reached, and in those circumstances, bearing in mind the increased quantity of wheat that would have to be handled, there was every possibility of almost doubling the estimate. Perhaps one of the most important features in connection with the railways was the output of Colliery coal, which had practically doubled during the last year. That must be very satisfactory to all who were interested in the development of the primary industries, and he hoped that the Minister would recognise the imperative

duty of the Government to do everything possible to facilitate the coal export trade, at least so far as Bunbury was concerned. Quite recently a special type of boxes had been made, with a view to facilitating the bunkering trade at Perth and Fremantle. By utilising those boxes it was possible to put the coal into the vessels at Bunbury at a rate of about 50 tons per hour, as against 15 tons under the old system of carrying it loose in the trucks. Several complaints had been made by the shippers that when they required those boxes they were not available and that the Government railways were using them for their own purposes on the landing stages. In view of the great importance of the bunkering trade to Western Australia, and the necessity for quick despatch of steamers, it was to be hoped that every consideration would be given to the representations that had been made by those who desired to increase that trade. In connection with the speeches which had been made on the railway estimates, he had been rather disappointed that while it was recognised that this was an occasion on which grievances should be voiced, hon. members were perhaps not aware that by the recent amendment of the constitution which had been carried through both Houses of the Federal Parliament, there was a possibility of practically taking away all responsibility, so far as wages and industrial conditions, were concerned, from the local Government, and placing it in the hands of the Federal Parliament.

Mr. Scaddan: No.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE: It seemed to him that, so far as the workers of Western Australia were concerned, they had very little indeed to gain from the conditions which might be imposed throughout Australia.

Mr. Scaddan: The conditions that obtained in Tasmania and other States are a menace to the worker of Western Australia, and if he can assist them he ought to do it.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE: So far as the conditions of the workers of the Railway Department in this State

were concerned, it was very gratifying to know that apparently they were well satisfied with their lot, and it was undesirable that anything should take place which would disturb the harmonious relations existing at the present time. The railway employees in this State had better conditions than their fellow employees in the Eastern States, and it was not likely that those conditions would be improved and that differential treatment would be given to the separate States.

Mr. Bolton: It was distinctly stated that they would have to make differential rates.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE: Some reason would have to be put forward why the differential rates should be given so far as Western Australia was concerned.

Mr. Scaddan: The increased cost of living.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE: Making all allowances for the difference in the cost of living he maintained that the Western Australian workers generally would have more to lose by coming under an award of the Federal Arbitration Court than if they remained under the State jurisdiction.

Mr. Scaddan: They need not go before the Federal authorities if they are satisfied.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE: Then apparently those who had been arguing on that matter were altogether wrong because Mr. Irvine, who was recognised as a constitutional authority, had expressed an entirely opposite view. He was a man who was supposed to support the amendment of the constitution, so far as it referred to monopolies in trade and commerce, so that he had been speaking in a purely impartial manner and he was one who had a constitutional knowledge of that important matter. He had not had the opportunity of giving very great consideration to the question, but it was to be regretted that such an important matter had not received more attention than perhaps some of the smaller grievances that had been directed to the Minister personally.

Mr. Bath : The condition of the State Arbitration Act has forced the Commonwealth to do this.

Hon. Sir N. J. MOORE : It seemed to him that in view of that suggested amendment of the Constitution this would have been an opportune time to have had some discussion on a matter of very great importance to the State.

Mr. McDOWALL : Members had listened with pleasure to the optimistic speech of the Minister for Railways, and he congratulated him upon realising that the country was in for a prosperous time. The Minister had observed that in a very short period the State would have something like 3,000 miles of railway open, but in referring to the various lines he had not mentioned that most important railway of all, the railway from Norseman to Esperance. He presumed it was simply a slight omission which would be rectified in the near future.

Mr. Bolton : Very slight.

Mr. McDOWALL : The member for North Fremantle should not begin to cry out too soon. But if the Minister had failed to mention the Esperance railway, he had referred to another matter which affected the people on the Eastern goldfields to a certain extent. The Minister had stated that he had reduced the railway fares and created a zone system so that children could be carried from Laverton to Albany for the small sum of 12s. 6d., that female attendants would be carried for 25s., two female attendants to be allowed for every ten children, and that one male attendant could be carried the same distance for 30s. Seeing that the goldfields people could not get to Esperance the next best thing was to make provision for them to go to Fremantle. It must not be forgotten, however, that those cheap rates were chiefly in connection with the Fresh Air League, a body which had done excellent work. It must be realised that a very large percentage of the goldfields population did not desire their children to go to the coast under the auspices of the league. Mothers did not like to be separated from their children and to give them over to the

charge of others, and therefore some other system of cheap fares was absolutely essential in order to give them the coastal atmosphere which they required. The Minister for Railways had pointed out that cheap excursions were in existence at the present time, and that he expected in January next to run at least two special trains per week. He congratulated the Minister on considering the goldfields people to that extent but he sincerely trusted that the trains would not be limited to two a week, but that an endeavour would be made to have a great many cheap trains run from the goldfields to the coast.

Mr. Heitmann : A quarter-hour service.

Mr. McDOWALL : Even that would not be objected to. But there was no question that cheap railway fares were important, not only to the children but to the adult people. Persons on the coast had no conception of what a strenuous time the people had during the summer months on the goldfields, and consequently any move in the direction of facilitating people getting to the coast was a good one. As it was understood that the Esperance railway would not be put in hand at least during the next three months, they must make the best of what they could get. He did not pose as a railway man, but he did want to say a word or two in connection with the point raised by Sir Newton Moore. That hon. member had pointed out that if the Commonwealth referendum were carried the State would be giving up the whole of the industrial control of the railways. The matter did not appear to him in that light ; what he understood of the proposal of the Commonwealth was that the Federal Authority would only interfere if the State did not do the work that it should do. The Commonwealth would have co-ordinate powers with the States, and if the States did the proper thing, and acted fairly and conscientiously so far as its employees were concerned, the Commonwealth would not step in.

Mr. Bath : The Federal authority is in the nature of a court of appeal.

Mr. Scaddan : No no.

Mr. Bath : Practically.

Mr. Scaddan: Co-ordinate powers absolutely.

Mr. McDOWALL: In his interpretation the States and the Commonwealth would have co-ordinate powers, and if the States chose to exercise their powers and introduce efficient legislation, the Commonwealth would not interfere, but if the States failed in that respect the Commonwealth would step in and raise the wages to a reasonable and proper standard. Tasmania was a menace to the whole of the working population of the Commonwealth and that should certainly not be allowed to exist. If by carrying the referendum we did that amount of good we would be doing excellent work. He trusted the Minister would not be niggardly over his promise of cheap fares for the goldfields.

Mr. MURPHY: The hon. member claimed that if the State did not do its duty the Commonwealth would step in; but who was to be the judge? It seemed the hon member with others was only anxious that State rights on every occasion should be taken away from the State Governments. If the referendum should be carried in April it would mean another curtailing of our powers as a self-governing State. It was to be hoped the public would not take the advice of the hon. member to hand over to the Commonwealth any more powers than were already handed over.

Mr. HUDSON: For about 18 months the men employed as lumpers on the Hopetoun jetty were engaged at regular wages, and about 20 or 30 of them formed a union. They were able to earn a comfortable living though not necessarily all from the Railway Department: they were able to secure other employment. The Commissioner employed two men to a truck; and this continued until suddenly at the time of the visit of a new steamer, the "Kurnalpi," the men were notified that only one man would be employed in each truck. This was just at the time the men were having trouble with the captain of the "Kurnalpi." They contended it was necessary to have two men to a truck to discharge coke in an open roadstead. It was

admitted that at Fremantle there was only one man employed to each truck, with one man cleaning up, that was three men to two trucks; but Fremantle was a protected harbour, whereas Hopetoun was an open roadstead. The men, therefore, contended there was greater danger in following their employment. The only reason apparent actuating the Commissioner in declaring that one man was sufficient for each truck was that it was an attempt to assist the shipping companies to deal with these unfortunate men trying to earn a living at the port, although it was in the interests of the department that lumpers should be kept there, because there was not sufficient work to keep a permanent staff on the jetty. Questions were asked the Minister in the House on the 17th November last, and the Minister in reply stated that stewards, cooks, and pantry-men on the "Kurnalpi" volunteered their services to take the place of the lumpers who refused to work unloading the coke from this steamer, but in reply to the next question the Minister admitted that these stewards and cooks and pantry-men were paid the lumpers' wages.

(Mr. Taylor resumed the Chair.)

Mr. HUDSON: In their action the lumpers were backed up by the railway men and by the seamen of the steamer. The seamen knew better and refused to unload the ship. So the cooks and stewards were employed to beat the lumpers. Though it actually cost the department more to employ these men, it was done to deprive the lumpers of their living and to break down their little union. Why should the Railway Department, in trying to make a few paltry shillings, go out of its way to employ men already employed on the ships and not living in the locality, instead of employing those men living in the port and trying to make an honest living. The Traffic Manager practically admitted that the reason was on account of the lumpers refusing to work on the trucks because of the dispute with the captain of the "Kurnalpi."

He went on further to say he was advised that when men were required to clean up the "Kurnalpi's" coke that accumulated on the jetty the president of the union would not permit them to work. The reason was that these ship pantrymen had been employed for the greater part of the day and for the best part of the week, and the Commissioner wanted the lumpers to go on and sweep up for the other men who had practically taken the bread out of their mouths. It was a great injustice that had been inflicted on these men. They should be encouraged there and they were entitled to have their employment and to be engaged on the few occasions that the vessels visited that port. It was an outrage, and to use the language of the member for Claremont when he was speaking earlier in the afternoon, it was shabby treatment to mete out to these men who had stuck to the Railway Department in their initial troubles and helped them to discharge at the port when men were not obtainable. Now, when things became slack and a disturbance occurred with the shipping company the department turned round and deprived those men of their livelihood and tried to break up their social arrangements. The Minister should see that some redress was given to these particular men.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 5.48 p.m.

Legislative Council, Tuesday, 13th December, 1910.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the President: The Public Accounts for the financial year ended 30th June, 1910, accompanied by the twentieth report of the Auditor-General.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Report of the Superintendent of Public Charities for year ended 30th June, 1910. 2, Report of the Royal Commission on charges of corruption in the Lands Department.

BILL—PERTH MUNICIPAL GAS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

Report, after recommitment, adopted.

BILL—SUPPLY, £207,443.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly) in moving the second reading said: This is the third Supply Bill brought down this session. It is necessary on account of the lateness in the passing of the Revenue Estimates. The amount will simply cover the necessary expenditure for the current month; it will carry us on to the end of the month and it is required in order to legalise expenditure and meet the salaries for the month. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—LICENSING.

In Committee.

Resumed from 8th December; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair.

Clause 76—Resolutions to be submitted:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: There was an amendment standing in his name.

The CHAIRMAN: It was understood the hon. member had withdrawn his amendment; at all events one had been withdrawn.