

asleep, and neither are they procrastinating. The Government are not without a policy, and I assure hon. members it is our desire to carry out our policy. If hon. members will only admit that the Government have a great responsibility, and accept the knowledge that the expenditure of many of the great departments of domestic concern cannot be easily reduced at the present time, I think we shall be able to arrive at a basis of general economy, which the Government will carry out and bring to fruition as time goes on.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.52 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 13th February, 1913.

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

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

### BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

Reports of Committee adopted.

### BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

### BILL—INTERPRETATION.

Introduced by the Attorney General, and read a first time.

### PAPERS—LUMPING TROUBLE, FREMANTLE.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle) [5.57]: I move—  
"That full reports from the Police Department of all trouble on the Fremantle wharf since the 1st November, 1917, be laid upon the Table of the House."

I am sure hon. members will realise that the motion is being moved simply in the interests of justice. From Press reports of the feeling and the occurrences in Fremantle as the result of the unfortunate difficulty of last year,

many people are inclined to conclude that the national volunteers who are employed on or about the wharves are of the nature of stained-glass angels, and that the original and real lumpers are begrimed with the smoke of hell. I submit that police reports giving full details of the conduct of the men, and of the troubles which have occurred during the period in question, will be of interest not only to members of this Chamber but to the people of the State. At the outset I acknowledge that it may be a rather difficult matter for the Government to produce the police reports; and I wish to make it perfectly clear that it is the Police Department I want the reports from, and not from the committee of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, which is likewise sitting in judgment upon the lumpers—sitting in judgment, not as a court of law, but as a Star Chamber to decide whether the original lumpers shall, or shall not, be allowed on the wharf to earn their living in the way in which they have been accustomed to earn it. The Press reports have been very brief, and have afforded the public very little upon which to form a judgment. The Press have informed us that during the early part of January a national volunteer was found to be in possession of a loaded revolver in the street, and that he was charged with that offence and also with having used obscene language. He was fined for those offences, which, I venture to suggest, represented contraventions of the law of the land not merely in the legal aspect but also in the moral aspect, having regard to the second charge. The punishment awarded to the national volunteer was a fine of only £1. On the other hand, an unfortunate lumper who had not the privilege of being protected as a national volunteer, was brought up before the same court on a charge of common assault. Unluckily for the lumper, the court which tried the case had as one of its members the gentleman who is now president of the Fremantle Shipping Association—a gross partisan as regards the action of the lumper. This man whose name is Daniel Kelly, for an offence which certainly did not compare in its magnitude with that of the national volunteer, received a sentence of three months' imprisonment without the option of a fine.

The Minister for Works: What did he do?

Mr. JONES: He attempted to hit a national volunteer, and I submit to hon. members that in realisation of the feeling which always must exist, when men have come along and have attempted to take the livelihood from the real workers, who for some cause have left their employment, that feeling must be received with a spirit of tolerance. If a non-partisan bench had dealt with the case of Kelly, a fine would have been sufficient to meet the case. But the man was tried by a bench which was presided over by a gentleman named Nicholas, the president of the Shipping Association. I do not wish hon. members to confuse him with Nicholas Romanoff, at present in Siberia, although some of his actions might lead us to believe that he was one and the same person. At the same time, being a partisan, he had no right to sit in the court and try a man who was charged with simple

assault. These are two of the cases which have come under the notice of the people of Fremantle as a result of the lumpers' trouble, and I submit that a simple police report upon the matter would throw some light on it, and would help us to realise that there is something to be said for the lumper, in spite of the newspaper reports which make him out to be such a fearful creature. I submit that the Government will be acting in the fullest interests of justice if they allow this motion to go through and permit the reports of the Police Department to be laid on the Table of the House.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [5.4]: Generally speaking the reports in the possession of the Police Department on any matter which has been investigated are confidential, and cannot be, or should not be, called for in this House, and to ask for their publication is, as I have already stated in this Chamber, contrary to what is known as public policy. The idea of the publication of the reports is to find out who made them, and at whose instigation this, that, and the other was done. It is wrong that officers in the execution of their duty should be pilloried for doing what they believe to be the right thing, and what they are paid to do. Any questions that may be asked in regard to particular actions of the Police or Law Departments will be gladly answered, and any information desired by hon. members will be given. But, I venture to say, hon. members should not ask for the publication of reports. We have heard the hon. member's story to the effect that Kelly is an aggrieved person.

Mr. Jones: He is doing three months; that is enough to grieve anybody.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have some knowledge of this case. Speaking from memory Kelly assaulted another man without provocation and knocked him down. The other man, whose name I think is Cleverly—

Mr. Jones: One of the national workers.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Cleverly was a national worker and was interfered with by Kelly, who threatened him and was about to assault him. Cleverly is a small man and elderly. Kelly is a man in the prime of life, a big man and in stature resembling the member for—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He resembles me in stature.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He resembles the member for Fremantle in stature. He is a solidly built man, anyhow. Cleverly saw a policeman in the neighbourhood and approached him to report that he was afraid of Kelly, and to ask for protection. Kelly came upon the scene and the policeman asked for his name. Kelly then raised his fist and knocked Cleverly down. That was characterised by the magistrate as an unprovoked and cruel assault. No man is allowed to take the law into his own hands. The case was tried before two justices of the peace at Fremantle, Messrs. Nicholas and Purdie, who, after hearing the evidence, awarded a sentence of three months imprisonment. Those are the facts. What police reports can the hon. member want in

connection with this matter? He knows the facts as well as I do, although he did not state them. I could supply him with a copy of the evidence, but it is wrong to ask for private and confidential reports of the police which may be in existence. It is not only wrong to ask for these reports, but it would be wrong to give them. I have no desire to cover up the tracks of anything that may be done in the Police department, and any reasonable question which the hon. member may ask in connection with the case will be answered as fully as possible.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle [5.10]): I can tell by the interjections from one or two hon. members, particularly the Minister for Works, that they simply regard the action of the hon. member who moved the motion as so much flapdoodle or flag-flying. The Attorney General is far from the mark when he suggests that it is the hon. member's desire to find out who made the report. I do not think the hon. member wants to know that. The industrial trouble which took place at Fremantle recently was conducted in a more orderly manner than has been the case in connection with any similar trouble in any part of the world.

The Attorney General: No one disputes that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The police on duty there have had no difficulties to cope with, a fact which was responsible for one or two interjections from me during the course of the speeches made by the Treasurer and the leader of the Opposition in connection with the Budget, when I stated that money was being wasted by keeping the police employed on the Fremantle wharves. I have taken the opportunity on several occasions to visit the wharves, and have seen half-a-dozen or a dozen policemen in plain clothes there, when there was not the slightest necessity for them to be there at all. These police have written reports to the Colonial Secretary, other reports which have been published in the Press, but with these we have no concern; we are anxious to know who was responsible for causing the small disturbances which did take place there. The police are the only people who can give us the information, and not those who may be partisans. Recently a man was fined altogether about £3 after having pleaded guilty so as not to be locked up during the holidays. This man was attacked by two men, and though he knocked out both, proceedings were taken against him. The police knew the facts when the matter came before the court, but asked for a remand. The man, however, preferred to plead guilty so as to have the matter determined there and then. He was attacked by two national workers—I would not call them national volunteers, although I honestly believe that some men did actually go on the wharves believing that they were doing the proper thing. As soon as the lumpers returned to work, however, those national volunteers left the wharves, but not so the beer sparrers of the country, who also went down there to work with the national volunteers. I have heard it said that this was a godsend to the hotel-

keepers of Perth, because they were not required to get counter lunches as had been the case previously. These men went to Fremantle, and were fed, clothed, attended to, and nursed by the Government at a cost of between £2,000 and £3,000. But that has nothing to do with the motion. I was just pointing out that the police of Fremantle are well aware that attempts have been made to cause a disturbance. What would you say, Mr. Speaker, if a man said to you "We have got you down now, we will rub you in the dirt"? I know what would have happened some years ago. That man would have been thrown into the river. Did the police report that a certain gentleman who tried to get into a Government position, a man who has never done a day's work in his life, came down and dug the point of an umbrella into a lumper's ribs? That man would certainly have gone into the river but for some members of the lumpers' executive who urged their men not to cause any disturbance. The police were there; did they report the incident? These are the points we would like to be informed upon. Why cannot the public get some reliable information in regard to the disturbances at Fremantle? As a result of these men going down and taking the jobs of the honest lumpers, every lumper to-day has lost his name and is known by a number, the same as a prisoner. He is No. 1, No. 10, or No. 20. That is how they are called up to be engaged on work. A farming gentleman who happened to be on the wharf recently heard this and asked what it meant. I told him, whereupon he said, "It is about time to leave this country. I am afraid Western Australia has gone back to its old customs." Every man has now a number and has lost his individuality. It is only fair that we should see these reports by the police in order that we may discover the injustice done to the lumpers. I did not agree with the action taken by the men at the time, but we are all liable to make mistakes. I myself make many, and no doubt members opposite make some. Even an Honorary Minister, it is said, made a mistake the other day. A large number of these men did what they honestly believed was right, and it is our duty to see that justice is their portion. If the lumpers at Fremantle want to kick up a row, there is not sufficient police force in the State to stop them. They could throw every policeman into the river. It would not be the first time. They tossed a mounted policeman on the wharf some years ago during industrial trouble. The Minister for Works knows that.

The Minister for Works: You are not proud of it, are you?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am proud of their strength, and I say that their good sense in keeping order during the strike is something to their credit. Amongst a body of 700 or 800 men there are bound to be among them some who want to kick over the traces. In face of this, the lumpers' executive kept order in such a manner that extra police were not required at Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: You do not justify the assault on this man Cleverly, do you?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know anything about it, but if the Minister will refer to the Minister for Mines or to the Attorney General, he will find it is very rare that a man is sent to gaol without the option of a fine in the lower courts.

The Minister for Mines: It depends upon the gravity of the offence.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is a very rare occurrence. I know the man who committed the offence very well. The trouble was brought about through drink. If the man had been sober he would never have committed the assault, and I am inclined to think that something had previously taken place which excited him to the action he took. As the member for Fremantle (Mr. Jones) has said, the fact that this man was not given the option of a fine was freely commented on at the time. He is an old British Navy man of about my size and age. I was surprised to hear the Attorney General say that he was a big, upstanding man like the member for Fremantle. Order and quietness were splendidly maintained down there, and those leading the men did their best to assist the police in keeping order. Malicious and untruthful statements in regard to the men have been made by persons outside the police force. When there is anything wrong the police take action to vindicate the law and keep order; and in the interests of the men who behaved themselves so well, I think it is only fair that the reports from the Police Department should be laid on the Table.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [5.22]: I do not think the discussion of the motion should resolve itself into a debate as to the general ill-conduct or good conduct of the lumpers during the last trouble. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Jones) said the man in question was punished for an attempted assault. He either did not know or did not think it necessary to mention what the Attorney General has since told us. First there was an attempt at assault, and afterwards there was a completed assault. In my opinion the action taken by this particular individual constituted utter defiance of the law. The fact that a policeman speaks to a man and points out that a complaint has been made, does not warrant that man in completing what he attempted to do before. A flouting of the law is not to be lightly regarded by any member of the House. If no respect is to be paid to the law, we are coming to a state of affairs very serious indeed. I will vote against the motion. I do not think these reports should be disclosed. Moreover, to my mind the motion carries with it a threat which has been discernible in similar motions or questions previously brought before the House. We had a request for the full register in regard to the national workers. What was that wanted for?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I did not want to see the register.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the register of national workers was placed upon the Table, we should very soon be able to discover the real motive underlying the demand for it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think this has anything to do with the motion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I can prove that there are on that register names that were sent in without the consent of the persons.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I merely referred to the question of the national register by way of analogy. The full reports of the police would probably contain names which some who have not the restraint of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) would glory in obtaining for the purpose of subsequently getting home on those supporting law and order.

Mr. Green: But they know those who were working on the wharves; they are marked men; they are scabs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Here we have the unblushing testimony of hon. members opposite.

Mr. Green: And you will be known as a member of the scab Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would much prefer to be in a scab Government than to uphold those striking at the roots of law and order. I will certainly vote against the motion. I do not think any case has been made out in support of it. I compliment the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) on the moderation of his remarks, but I think that he too has been a little led astray in connection with this case. He certainly advised the men not to strike, but they did not take his advice.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They were on strike before I knew anything about it.

Mr. ROCKE (South Fremantle) [5.27]: I do not think there is any vindictive intention underlying the motion. I do not know either of the parties who have been mentioned, but according to the reading of the motion I think there is a feeling that somebody has been treated unjustly. That being so, it is desirable to have the matter sifted in order to find out, if we can, who was responsible for the injustice. I do not think we should bother about going into the justification of the strike at this stage. Certainly we must agree that the conduct of the strikers was most exemplary. That was brought about, I think, largely by the fact that they had a wise president who gave them some very fine advice; and because the men accepted that advice. The strike of the Fremantle lumpers will be known through all time as the beerless strike.

Mr. Mullany: The member for North-East Fremantle said that this assault was due to drink.

Mr. ROCKE: That was one case only. Reading the evidence of both cases as they came before the court, one cannot help feeling that a good deal of harshness was meted out in the one case and of leniency in the other. The Attorney General spoke of the size of the one man as compared with the other. I will never agree that a little man should be afraid of a big one.

The Attorney General: But he is more readily knocked down.

Mr. ROCKE: As a matter of common justice I intend supporting the motion. I admit

that there may be times when papers of a private and confidential nature should not be placed on the Table, but if it is a matter of injustice done to any resident of the State—

The Attorney General: Where is the injustice?

Mr. ROCKE: I do not know. We may find it in the papers. If it is a matter of injustice being done to some person, I will do my best to have the question ventilated.

The Attorney General: No injustice was alleged by the mover.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison) [5.30]: I do not see why there should be such strong opposition to a motion like this. It is merely asking for reports from the Police Department connected with the trouble at Fremantle. I think the House should be placed in possession of these reports. There has been a great deal of criticism hurled against the men here and also in the Eastern States. Here and over there action was taken with the deliberate intention of forcing the men to do certain things and we should have the fullest reports on the matter. If these reports are placed on the Table I think Parliament will have a different light thrown on the subject. The public are entitled to the fullest particulars. I know, as a positive fact, that in Melbourne cart-loads of "black" timber was deliberately placed in each timber yard to force the men to cease work because it was known the men would not handle "black" timber. In Sydney the same course of action was adopted throughout the trouble—I say it from a great deal of experience in these matters—with the object of forcing the men to cease work.

The Minister for Works: In this State?

Mr. HOLMAN: I am not speaking of this State, although some action may have been taken at Fremantle to force the men to do what they did. Members scoff at the remarks but why do the Government fear to place the reports on the Table if there is not something to hide? I take it the Government are afraid to place the reports on the Table and therefore they have done something which they are ashamed of.

The Minister for Works: To be added to the list of marked men.

Mr. HOLMAN: In all probability if the actions of these men are made public it will do a great deal of good. The class of men who will take another man's place in times like this is not worth considering and the actions of a Government that will hide anything should be published broadcast. It is not right for men to take the place of other men at such a time.

Member: Shipping was held up.

Mr. HOLMAN: The hon. member interjects and says that shipping was held up, but no shipping came to this State at that time and very little was held up. If the reports are placed on the Table they will show the exact position of affairs. We know full well the Press of this country and in the Eastern States only published what they desired to suit the so-called Nationalist Governments in office at the time. I was in the State and I could get no information to satisfy me and I am sure there was an undercurrent moving.

It was started by the so-called Nationalist Governments to bring about trouble throughout the Commonwealth. We want to find out, by having the reports laid on the Table, whether this Government was in tow with the Governments of the other States when they took action.

The Minister for Works: That is strong.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the Government are afraid to place the reports on the Table we can draw our own conclusions. If they have something to hide let them keep it to themselves, but the time may come when the whole of the reports will be made known.

The Attorney General: You then may dismiss all the officials who made reports.

Mr. HOLMAN: No, we do not adopt the dirty actions taken by the people whom the Minister represents. I hold in my possession black lists which have been spread broadcast by employers because the men asked for a fair deal. The dirty methods adopted by the employers to-day are no credit to the people who have received support from them. I can speak of reports in the Press, which showed that the employees compelled men to hold tickets from their previous employers before they could get other employment. The dirtiest form of blacklisting.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. HOLMAN: I am sorry I am forced to make these remarks by the unseemly interjections of the Attorney General. I do not see any just reason or cause why the reports should not be placed on the Table. If there is nothing to hide let the Government give us the reports, let us know what has taken place.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.35]: I rise to oppose this motion if only on account of the remarks that emanated from the member for Kalgoorlie. It is said these men who had been employed were marked. Why were they marked?

Mr. Munsie: Because they went scabbing.

Mr. PICKERING: Because they went to work for the benefit of the country. If these reports are asked for simply to ascertain the names of certain people, then I oppose the motion.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle—in reply) [5.36]: I am sorry that my simple motion has raised so much controversy. All I require from the Government is a true report from the police department, because I am one of the optimists who believe that the police department can give true reports of the trouble that took place on the Fremantle wharves. I wish no names disclosed. If the Government are afraid to place the names on the Table let them adopt the convict system in vogue at the present time on the wharf and give the men numbers. Much has been made of the statement of the member for Kalgoorlie that the men who have, in the classic language of the member for Hannans, scabbed on the wharf, will be marked men in the future. I think that much that has been said is in consequence of the lack of knowledge on the part of many members as to what are the working

class ideals in Australia. I am satisfied that they know, as you yourself, Mr. Speaker, and even some of the members opposite, know the position that the real Australian worker will take up; he cannot help it. It is bred in him in the freedom of the bush, in the air of Australia, in that he can smell the scab, although that scab may be a hundred yards distant.

Hon. P. Collier: The air must be pretty putrid around Fremantle then.

Mr. JONES: It is that that the hon. member for Kalgoorlie means when he refers to scabs being marked men. I have been working in sheds in the North-West where the approach of a loyalist—I am sorry I used the word, it must be hurtful to the ears of the member for Sussex who thinks that these men were doing Nationalist service—has absolutely held up work without a word having been said. These men will realise that that is their future, the ostracised future as far as the white workers are concerned throughout the length and breadth of this free Australia. I am sorry I wandered from the matter of my motion. I hope the Attorney General will deal kindly with the motion, that he will realise that I have a true desire to get a just report, simply that and nothing more. I do not wish to cause anyone to be victimised through this motion. I simply want hon. members and the people of this country to realise that the men who have been working on the wharves in Fremantle for many years are not as black as they are painted but that the men working there as nationalist workers are very much blacker than the papers and members opposite would have us believe. I agree with some members that many men went to Fremantle originally because they had a mistaken idea as to the national interests.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing the whole situation under this motion.

Mr. JONES: I was endeavouring to reply to some of the criticism of hon. members. I do not wish to unduly trespass on your generosity, Mr. Speaker. In my reply to this debate I simply ask that the Attorney General will realise that it is with a feeling of tolerance and justice that I move the motion, to get the reports from the police to show the exact position as far as this trouble on the Fremantle wharves is concerned.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	..	29

Majority against .. 16

#### AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Green	Mr. Roche
Mr. Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Lambert	

(Teller.)

## NOES

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Davies	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Draper	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Durack	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

# RETURN—FERTILISER AND FEEDING STUFFS ACT, INSPECTORS' APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.47]: I move—

“That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—1, The number of inspectors appointed under the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1904, and its amendment, and the names and dates of appointment of those still acting; 2, The number and nature of all complaints lodged by the inspectors under the different sections of the Act, and particulars of the convictions obtained; 3, Particulars of any complaints lodged with the Minister by duly appointed inspectors which have been allowed to lapse, together with the reasons for non-procedure under the Act.

I understand from the Premier that he will furnish the particulars asked for in this return, as far as it is possible to do so. I do not, therefore, intend to take up the time of the House in connection with this motion. The reason why I brought the matter forward was because of certain prosecutions which have taken place under the Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs Act, and my desire to have the producer properly safeguarded. I would point out that the producer, or the farmer, has great difficulty in making a success of his calling under normal conditions, but if, at the same time, he has to contend against fertilisers and feeding stuffs which are not of the quality he desires to purchase, his difficulties are very greatly increased. I take it from the replies given by the Premier to my questions on this matter, that he is fully seized of the necessity for safeguarding the producer in this respect, and the necessity for amending the Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs Act accordingly. I have, therefore, much pleasure in moving this motion, and am prepared to leave the matter in the hands of the Premier.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [5.49]: I must say that the hon. member is very prolific in these matters. I hope he will not expect to keep the officers of the Agricultural Department continually employed in making out returns of this nature. We are desirous of effecting economies in our departments, and hon. members generally should consider well, when they ask for these returns, as to what the cost is likely to be. A great

deal of work will be necessitated in the preparation of this return, and when it is made ready I really do not know what advantage it will be either to the hon. member or to the House. I dare say, however, the hon. member thinks differently. Requests of this nature only put the country to additional expense. If these returns are likely to furnish an advantage corresponding with the amount of labour required in making them out, there would be no objection. In many cases of this kind there is no advantage commensurate with the trouble and expense entailed in providing the particulars required. I shall be very pleased, however, to obtain all the information I can on this subject for the hon. member.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a remarkable wind up to the chastisement you have been giving the hon. member.

The PREMIER: As I have told the hon. member, I shall be pleased to let him have all the information that is available, without putting the department to more labour and expense than are necessary.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [5.51]: This is a sort of slandy-gaff reply that the Premier has given to the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering). He is going to supply the information asked for if it will not put the departmental officers to too much inconvenience. I take it that the hon. member will be satisfied with that pronouncement, and that, in spite of the mild rebuke at the hands of the Premier to one of his party, the usual good feelings will continue to exist between them. All will thus be well. There is, however, an evident lack of consistency in the attitude of the Government on this motion as compared with the motion which has just been dealt with. The outcry of Ministers in connection with the last motion was that there was going to be some victimisation.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You cannot discuss the last motion.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Mr. Speaker will put me right if I am wrong. From paragraphs 2 and 3 of the motion, it would appear that the hon. member is asking for the number and nature of all complaints lodged by the inspectors, and particulars of the convictions obtained, and particulars of any complaints lodged with the Minister by duly appointed inspectors which have been allowed to lapse. The hon. member is, in fact, asking that publicity should be given to all reports made by inspectors who have been responsible for initiating prosecutions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And particulars of the convictions.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is, of course, a most unheard of proceeding to have particulars of these convictions laid on the Table of the House.

The Attorney General: The hon. member will not get the names.

Hon. P. Collier: The Premier has agreed to give the information.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Government have evidently desired to advance reasons why one motion should meet with opposition and not another. The rapidity with which they wish to please a supporter of theirs is evidence to my mind that they are not prepared

to treat every motion on its merits. What advantage will it be to the country to have particulars of these convictions laid on the Table of the House? This may even lead to the dismissal of one of the inspectors, or of all of them. It seems to me that if they prosecute their duty in future on similar home-steads the dogs will be put on to them. If farmers have been interested in prompting the hon. member to ascertain which particular inspector was responsible for a particular prosecution, the outlook for that inspector may be a serious one.

Mr. Pickering: You are barking up the wrong tree.

Mr. Johnston: These are manure firms.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We do not want to see any firms victimised in this country, and I do not think the motion should be supported.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [5.54]: Whilst I intend to support this motion, as I supported the previous one. I believe that too much is made of this so-called confidential information. It would be very much better if more information was given in the first instance as to how these things came about. Whilst the motion, as it stands on the Notice Paper, appears perfectly innocent, the mover, in the few remarks which he made, distinctly stated that he desired to get certain information as to how certain prosecutions came about. That puts his motion on exactly the same footing as the previous motion. I believe that a great number of these motions are simply put on the Notice Paper for, what is termed, kite-flying purposes, that members moving them do not really require the information, but that, in many instances, they wish to be able to say at a later period that they asked for this information and that the Government refused to give it. I am going to support this motion, because I believe that if an hon. member moves in this House for information of this character, the information should, if possible, be given to him.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [5.56]: I rise to oppose this motion. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) certainly laid himself open to the well directed rebuke of the Premier when he asked for this information, but did not give the slightest reason for his request. It is to be hoped that the Premier, instead of buttering hon. members, will come forward in this manner and take a firmer stand, unless it is shown clearly that the information asked for is of great value. I cannot see what prompted the member for Sussex to ask for these particulars, but I do know that, speaking on this subject the other night, I said that I considered the Government should do something in the way of exacting a reasonable amount from the fertiliser companies who are getting the profits out of these concerns. If these fertiliser companies are now coming cap in hand to the Government, asking them to bring over their phosphate rock, the Government should certainly ascertain from these companies exactly where they stand. These companies are selling superphosphates at an enormous price, and yet this country is faced

with the actual cost. In many instances the farmers are faced with a selling cost of 10s. per ton.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the motion deals with the cost of superphosphate.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am only dealing with the application of the Fertiliser Act to this point.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion asks for certain information with regard to certain inspectors. I do not desire to hamper the hon. member.

Mr. LAMBERT: I think the administration of the Fertiliser Act should be thrown upon the shoulders of the fertiliser companies operating in this State. There is one matter in connection with the Fertiliser Act which should be seriously reviewed by the Government, and that is the present standard set for superphosphate in this State. I understand that this is 17.5.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot permit the hon. member to discuss the Act generally.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am only referring incidentally to that feature, because it represents the actual basis of the whole Fertiliser Act. I wish members would not take the Premier's view of this motion. While not at all wishing to blame the mover, I think the House should discount the desire of hon. members to see their names figuring upon the Notice Paper on the flimsiest possible excuse. Certainly that desire should be discounted by a Government professing to the House and to the country to be out for economy. For that reason I hope the Premier will not allow his good nature to sway him, but will take a stand in keeping with ordinary common sense, and tell members, irrespective of whether they are on his side or on the other side of the House, that when information of this nature, which can be of little or no use, is asked for, he will not put the departments to the expense of preparing returns.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [6.2]: I disagree both with the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) and the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) in regard to this motion. An hon. member has no option but to proceed by way of motion in order to obtain information which is not obtainable in reply to questions. Therefore, a member in such a position must move a motion; and let me point out that the information may be required not only for members, but for those whom members represent—our electors.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): What do your electors care about superphosphate?

Member: Do you support the motion?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I disagree with the statement that the motion should not have been brought forward. The Premier has asked the House, on the score of economy, to limit these motions as far as possible. Let me point out that there has not yet been a motion for a return moved by members on this side; so that we are certainly assisting the Government to economise in that respect. I share the view of the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) as regards the Government's inconsistency. Assuredly this motion asks for much more,

and much more detailed, information than was sought by the previous motion. This motion asks for details regarding convictions obtained, and acquittals, and cases in which no action was taken. To my thinking, it makes no difference whether a man is an inspector under the Fertiliser Act or a policeman, so far as his reports are concerned. In that respect both classes are on an equality. Why the Government, having maintained that the report of the policeman is confidential and on no account to be divulged, should declare the report of an inspector under the Fertiliser Act not to be confidential, and to be available to hon. members, I fail to understand. The explanation of the inconsistency is probably that suggested by the member for Forrest: this motion comes from the Government side of the House. Such discrimination, I contend, amounts to a prostitution of Parliament. The Labour Government, during their six years of office, never differentiated between the two sides of the House in regard to questions or to motions asking for information. The other day I asked a question as to which the Minister concerned thought that I had something behind; but the fact is I was merely obliging one of his supporters—which I can substantiate. I am prepared to subscribe £10 to the Perth Public Hospital if the Minister can prove that what I say is not correct.

MR. SPEAKER: I do not think the motion covers that matter.

HON. W. C. ANGWIN: On this motion the Government have turned a somersault. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Jones) asked for certain information, and was told by the Attorney General, "No; you cannot get it: it is of a confidential nature, and its publication would be detrimental to the interests of the officers." Had those police reports been made public, in all probability it would have had a restraining effect on the officers concerned when reporting in future. On this motion, however, the Premier sees no objection to the publication of the inspectors' reports. When the Premier rose, I suggested to my leader that the hon. gentleman would move the striking out of paragraphs 2 and 3 of the motion. I was indeed surprised when the Premier accepted the motion in its entirety. However, I agree with the motion, and I think the reports should be made available to the House if it is necessary for law and order. Still, I fail to understand the inconsistency of the Government.

MR. HOLMAN (Murchison) [6.8]: It is my intention to support this motion, because I think the main point has been missed by members who have already spoken. I regret that the mover did not fully explain his object. Apparently there is some agreement between the Government and the mover over this matter, as hon. members will perceive on referring to paragraph 3 of the motion—

Particulars of any complaints lodged with the Minister by duly appointed inspectors which have been allowed to lapse, together with the reasons for non-procedure under the Act.

In that paragraph is an innuendo that Ministers have failed in their duty—that some business people have been reported as selling

inferior fertiliser, and that these matters have been allowed to drop. Undoubtedly a grave charge of cloaking such matters is made by this motion. The request for the reasons for non-procedure itself casts a grave reflection on the Minister administering the Fertiliser Act. Has some wrong been done? Have complaints been made against sellers of fertiliser, and has the Minister, perhaps because he may be friendly with these business people, cloaked them and refrained from taking action on the complaints? When a member brings forward a motion of this character he should give the House full explanation. However, the Premier, most generously, has agreed to give all the information desired.

The Premier: No; such information as I can give.

MR. HOLMAN: I sincerely trust the Premier will do better in supplying information on this motion, if it is carried, than he did on the resolution carried at my instance by the last Parliament—a resolution which had reference to the expenditure of public moneys. Each item of information asked for by my resolution should have been available in a very short time, and at very little cost to the State; or else our Government accountancy is in a rotten condition. However, I shall deal with that matter at another time. Reverting to the motion, can the mover state of his own knowledge the number of complaints in which action has been taken, and the number in which the Minister has not taken action? If so, he would be giving the House an idea whether the motion should be supported or not. At present we are being asked to vote in the dark. The matter would seem to be of more importance than appears on the surface.

The Minister for Works: What do you propose the member for Sussex should do when he gets the information?

MR. O'LOGHLEN: He should make an attack on the Government.

MR. HOLMAN: The hon. member should give further reasons in support of his motion, so as to enable us to judge whether the underlying motive is idle curiosity, either on his part or on that of his constituents. While believing that every return and every report of benefit to members and to the State should be made available, I sincerely hope the particulars I have just asked for will be furnished by the mover when replying.

MR. NAIRN (Swan) [6.13]: I oppose the motion, for the same reason as I opposed the last one, and for an additional reason, which is that the mover has not taken this House into his confidence at all.

MR. O'LOGHLEN: You may be condemning the hon. member unjustly. Perhaps he has had an assurance that his motion will be carried.

MR. NAIRN: I am indeed sorry that the Premier has seen fit to give the mover and the House a promise which is not really a promise at all; a promise which, so far as I can see, has no value whatever. The hon. gentleman said that if it did not occasion the department too much trouble to get the information asked for by this motion, the mover would get the information. Such a promise has no virtue. Further, I protest against our



refusing, in one breath, to pass a motion on the ground that the information for which it asks is secret—

The Premier: No secret information is involved here.

Mr. NAIRN: I am speaking of the previous motion. More than once we have been told by the Attorney General that there is information coming to the departments which should be kept confidential and should on no account be disclosed to the public. On the face of it, this motion intends to bring to the surface, and to the knowledge of those interested, what is the motive behind the action of certain inspectors. If the inspectors under the Fertiliser Act are to do their duty fearlessly, they should be protected in exactly the same way as are the police and other departmental officers.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NAIRN: As I was about to remark before tea, there is one principle I have endeavoured to subscribe to and that is consistency, and if the vote which was recorded in connection with the motion moved by the member for Fremantle was right, we are bound, following the process of logic to take the same attitude on this question. The clause in the motion I particularly object to is the third, which refers to complaints lodged with the Minister by duly appointed inspectors which have been allowed to lapse, and also the non-procedure under the Act. In my opinion, the underlying reasons for not proceeding with these cases are of a strictly confidential nature, and if we are going to have an investigation into every report of an inspector, whether it be to recommend a prosecution or to suggest that a prosecution be not proceeded with, we will destroy the usefulness of the inspector. If the officer realises that every act of his is going to be subject to public review and criticism in the House, and investigation by members, he will not be encouraged to do his duty. For that reason I intend to adopt an attitude on this question similar to that which I followed in connection with the motion moved by the member for Fremantle. There are certain matters which should be accepted and treated as purely confidential by the Minister, and a report by an inspector is one of them, unless of course there has been a gross miscarriage of justice. Another aspect which appeals to me strongly is one which has been mentioned by the Premier, and that is the matter of expense in connection with these more or less useless motions. I can contemplate the member for Sussex rising in his place and condemning the Government for extravagance in all directions. If we are to have an army of clerks employed in the departments to prepare unnecessary and useless work of this description, we shall not be giving that assistance to our Ministers which it is our bounden duty to do. My experience in Parliament has not been long, but I have never on a single occasion been refused information by any Minister. If the member who moved the motion wanted reasonable information, he could get it without occupying the time of the House and wasting the time of the officers of the departments. Many people, however, take this as an oppor-

tunity to get an advertisement which they would not otherwise receive, and no vote of mine will assist in the waste of time and public money on matters such as this.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the Premier stated that he would accept the motion and give as much information to the hon. member as he could. If, however, the House carries the motion in its entirety it will be an instruction to the Government to supply the full information asked for, and if that is not supplied, the House may consider that it is being treated with contempt. To get over that difficulty I would suggest that the second and third paragraphs of the motion be deleted because it seems that there will be no difficulty about supplying the information contained in the first paragraph.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister—Pilbara) [7.35]: I desire to move an amendment—

“That paragraphs 2 and 3 of the motion be struck out.”

The Government are prepared to give information to all hon. members as far as it is possible for them to do, but there is some which it is not desirable to make public, and that information is particularly in regard to prosecutions. The Crown Law Department cannot disclose their reasons for not going on with a prosecution because an opposing lawyer on getting hold of it might be able to use it against the department. There are many other reasons, too, why this information should not be disclosed to the public. The Government are prepared to give all information in reason, provided of course that there is no great expense attached to the preparation of it, and provided also that it is of interest to the country. I think if we strike out the second and third paragraphs of the motion, the object of the member for Sussex will have been served.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex—on amendment) [7.40]: When I introduced the motion I stated that it was my desire to save the time of the House, but it seems to me that the desire of the member for Swan is that the time of the House shall be wasted. That hon. member represents an agricultural district, the interests of which are vitally concerned in giving proper effect to the Act.

Mr. Nairn: But he does not look for an advertisement.

Mr. PICKERING: The hon. member is quite out of order in accusing me of looking for an advertisement when I am merely studying the interests of the agricultural community of Western Australia. In framing this motion—it is one of the first I have had the honour of framing in this House—I admit I may have put it together indifferently, but the reason which prompted me to submit it was on account of the complaints which have been lodged and the failure to carry out prosecutions.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member should have given his reasons for submitting the motion when he moved it.

Mr. PICKERING: At any rate, I intend to oppose the amendment because it will defeat the object of the motion which was to

endeavour to secure an amendment of the Act in such a way as to protect the users of fertilisers and feeding stuffs. I asked certain questions of the Premier, one of which was, "Why are not feeding stuffs required to be registered under the Act?" and the reply was, "At the time the Act was passed it was not considered necessary." From my experience and from instances which have been brought under my notice, I consider it is necessary that feeding stuffs should be registered. The feeding stuffs which are sold to poultry farmers are such as are inimical to the best interests of that industry, and right through they are not what they are represented to be. Poultry farmers are entirely at the mercy of the merchants who retail these things. The reason for asking the question as to the number and nature of all complaints lodged by the inspectors under the different sections of the Act and for particulars of complaints lodged by inspectors which have been allowed to lapse, was to illustrate to the House the futility of passing legislation when it is not given effect to. The cost of furnishing the information for which I am asking will be infinitesimal. With regard to feeding stuffs particularly, there have been no prosecutions, while there have been complaints lodged and turned down. It is only right that these things should be investigated. My motion is not on all fours with that moved by the member for Fremantle; my only desire is to prove to the House that the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act is ineffective, and it is ridiculous for us to pass legislation and not be able to enforce it. The primary producer, as we all know, labours under very great difficulties, and when it comes to the buying of fertilisers and feeding stuffs which are under the cloak of an Act, which are practically hall-marked by that Act, he should not be exposed to the danger of buying stuff inimical to his interests. There were two prosecutions under the Act in respect of manure known as the Swan brand. I am not sure whether that has anything to do with the member for Swan, but judging by the way in which he has treated my motion, he appears to be in some measure interested.

Mr. Nairn: That is not so.

Mr. PICKERING: I have not brought the motion forward with the idea of advertising myself, nor with the object of making any reflection upon the inspectors. I brought it forward in the hope that the Government would see fit to so amend the Act that it should prove efficacious in the interests of agriculturists. I need not labour the question any further. I accept the remarks of members opposite in the good spirit in which they were made.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [7.46]: I think the member who moved the motion is quite within his rights, is in fact doing a service to a considerable section of the people in seeking to obtain the information he desires. I also think it is not quite right for any member of the House to accuse another member of ulterior motives in bringing forward motions of this kind. If one is to be charged with seeking to advertise himself

merely because he brings forward a matter of public interest such as that which we are now discussing, it is, to say the least of it, grossly unfair.

Mr. Thomson: What about the flag-waving episode?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think I ever accused the hon. member of flag waving. Others did, but I did not. If I did it was because, of course, knowing the hon. member as I do, the remarks I have just made do not apply to him. While listening to the discussion of the motion we have had an exhibition characteristic of the indecision of the Government. The Premier, after mildly reproving the hon. member for proposing to put the Government to the expense of preparing the return, wound up by saying that he would have the greatest satisfaction in supplying the information. Then, after a little consideration, the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) butted in and took the matter entirely out of the hands of the Premier, and moved an amendment which, if carried, would defeat the object the mover of the motion has in view. The amendment entirely contradicts the attitude adopted by the Premier. Who is the House to accept as leader? Are we to follow the Premier, who is agreeable to the motion and willing to supply the information—

The Minister for Mines: Some of the information.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, the whole of it; members know well what the Premier said. Are we to follow the Premier, or are we to accept the lead of the Honorary Minister? Where are we? Personally I am one of those who think that the House and the country are entitled to the fullest information upon this and similar questions. I have a vivid recollection of the attitude adopted by hon. members opposite, when sitting on this side, in regard to what they described as their inability to obtain information. They said they could not get information on any subject. Now, when they are in office, on the score of expense they take up the attitude of refusing to give information. The motion is important because, after all, if the inspectors have made complaints or recommendations to the Minister to take action against any offenders for breaches of the Act, and if the Minister has failed to take such action, the House is entitled to know of it. I supported the motion moved for the member for Fremantle (Mr. Jones) and I will vote for this one. To-day apparently we are all out to get reputations for consistency. The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) is supporting the motion in order to be consistent with his vote on a previous motion, while his friend on the right is opposing the motion with the same object of achieving consistency.

Mr. Mullany: I never made that remark.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not say the hon. member made any remark. I made it perfectly clear. In his attitude the hon. member is quite consistent. He voted for the previous motion and he will preserve his consistency by voting for the present one, while his friend on the right, having opposed

the previous motion, is also consistent in opposing this one.

Mr. MULLANY: And the leader of the Opposition is preserving consistency in voting for this motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. But while we three will be consistent, I venture to say that when the vote is taken there will be many others inconsistent in their attitude. However, I merely rose for the purpose of pointing out that the member who moved the motion is entitled to the information asked for. It is not going to cost £1,000 to supply, as one would imagine from the remarks of the opponents of the motion. An hour or two of research by a junior clerk will supply all the information. Personally, I am going to accept the Premier's lead on this question and refuse the lead of his colleague, who is in direct antagonism to his chief.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison—on amendment) [7.52]: I was much surprised at the attitude of the Honorary Minister as contrasted with that of the Premier. Before tea the Premier said he would supply the information, but after the tea adjournment another Minister moved a vital amendment to the motion. It would be interesting to know what transpired after we adjourned for tea.

Mr. SPEAKER: Was the hon. member in his place when I made a suggestion to the Premier in regard to the motion?

Mr. HOLMAN: Yes, and a very significant suggestion it was, because the amendment will have the effect of defeating the motion; it would be just as well to throw out the motion altogether, for there will be nothing left of it. After the Premier had informed the House that he would reluctantly agree to the motion, a subordinate Minister moved a direct amendment to the motion. Who is the real representative of the Government in this regard? Is there a split in the ministerial camp? There seems to have been a shattering of the idols since tea. If the amendment is carried it will be a direct contradiction of the Premier's promise, which was to give the information to the House. The Premier is in duty bound to carry out that promise.

Hon. P. Collier: He must vote against the amendment.

Mr. HOLMAN: Certainly he must, and if the amendment is carried the only thing for the Premier to do will be to hand over the reins to the Honorary Minister.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies—on amendment) [7.54]: I will oppose the amendment moved by the Honorary Minister. At the same time I think the fact that a Minister has had the courage to express his own opinions against those of his leader reveals the existence of a feeling that there should be more independence of thought and not so much servile following as we have had in the past. I believe it would be in the best interests of the State if we had more independence and less blind following of leaders. This House is a deliberative assembly, and when a member brings forward any question I cannot see why the fact that he is a

member of the Ministry binds him to a blind following of his leader in his pronouncement upon that question. This practice of blindly following leaders in Parliamentary and political circles is largely responsible for the unsatisfactory condition of the finances to-day. So, although I will oppose the amendment, I hold that a Minister or any member should have a perfect right to express his own opinion in the House, notwithstanding what his leader may have promised.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—on amendment) [7.55]: The Honorary Minister was quite within his rights in moving the amendment. I informed the House and the mover of the motion that I would accept the motion on the understanding that I should give all the information I could. It is impossible to give information that cannot be obtained. Some of this information may not be obtainable to-day, for the inquiry goes back to 1904. I informed the hon. member that I would supply all the information I could, and I am quite prepared to accept the motion on that understanding.

Hon. P. Collier: The amendment declares that you will give no information at all.

The PREMIER: No it does not. I recognise that if paragraphs 2 and 3 are struck out of the motion the hon. member will really be cut out entirely, but I gave the hon. member the assurance that I would supply all the available information. I accepted the motion on that understanding. At the same time, it will be left to me to decide whether there is in the available information anything of a private or confidential character which might place any individual in an invidious position. It will be my right to see that no person is so treated. All the information desired by the hon. member will be given as far as possible.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Then you oppose the amendment.

The PREMIER: I cannot vote for the amendment; because in the first instance I informed the House that I accepted the motion, and I am not going back on that undertaking; I never had any idea of going back on it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle—on amendment) [8.0]: I am very much surprised at the remarks of the Premier. He has been in Parliament as long if not longer than any member in the House to-day and he must be aware of the fact that the motion is in the possession of the House, and you, Mr. Speaker, explained the position very clearly before the tea adjournment. You pointed out, that the Premier could not give what he liked but he must give what the motion asks for, if the motion is carried. If the Premier has not the information he certainly cannot give it, but the Premier said, in the first instance, that it would take too long to get the information. But I will not say more than that because it may give the Premier a hint. I am surprised at the action of the Premier because we are in a difficult position. A

member asks for certain information and the Premier agrees to give that information. Then another member of the Cabinet moves an amendment and there is almost a split in the Cabinet. I hope the motion will be carried. I shall vote with the Premier on this occasion.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Resolved that motions be continued.

#### PAPERS—DRAGE VERSUS THE CROWN.

Motion by Mr. Maley, "That all papers in connection with Drage versus the Crown be laid on the Table of the House," read.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before the hon. member moves the motion, I would ask him to give the House an assurance that the case spoken of in the motion is not before any law court at the present time.

Mr. MALEY: I cannot give you that assurance, Mr. Speaker. The case is the subject of an appeal to the High Court.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then it is before the court and I shall have to rule the motion out of order. In doing so I should like to refer members to page 278 of "May," eleventh edition, which reads as follows:—

A matter, whilst under adjudication by a court of law, should not be brought before the House by a motion or otherwise.

I must rule the motion out of order under those conditions.

Mr. MALEY: With the permission of the House, I wish to amend the motion to read—

"That in the opinion of this House the advances made under the Industries Assistance Act to S. L. Burges were not in the best interests of the State."

Mr. SPEAKER: May I ask the hon. member what connection S. L. Burges has with the motion? Is he before the court; is he a party?

Mr. MALEY: S. L. Burges is an assisted settler under the Industries Assistance Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then the motion would come under the ruling that I have read. I cannot accept the motion.

#### RETURN — RAILWAY FARES AND FREIGHTS, SECTIONAL RETURNS.

Mr. STUBBS (Wagin) [8.5]: I move—

"That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing (1) The revenue and expenditure for passenger and coaching traffic on the Government Railways for the year ended 30th June, 1916 (a) on metropolitan-suburban section; (b) on traffic from last-mentioned area to the country; (c) on traffic from the country to stations and sidings wherever situated. (2) Same particulars as regards the goods, live stock, and miscellaneous traffic."

I wish it to be clearly and distinctly understood that I do not move this motion with the object of harassing the Government in any shape or form. I deem it my duty to call the attention of the House to the unbusinesslike methods adopted by this huge spending department. It is common knowledge through-

out the State that, in order to try and bring the expenditure and revenue of this great department much closer than has been the case during the past two or three years, the Commissioner proposes to increase fares and freights. My object in asking members to agree to the motion is that the taxpayers of the State shall be in possession of the information, and it will enable them, and also members, to judge of the reasons why the £500,000 deficit forecasted in the working of this year's railways will take place. The return, if supplied, will show the extent of this public utility. First, the motion asks for the revenue and expenditure on the metropolitan-suburban section, then the traffic from the metropolitan-suburban area to the country, and the traffic from the country to stations and sidings wherever situated. In the railways, as I said before, we have the greatest earning and spending department of the State. Annually a report is published by the Commissioner and from the report it is absolutely impossible for members to get the information for which I am asking. I claim that this information is fundamentally necessary before anyone can consider equitably the matter of fares and freights and the railway financial policy. In any private business concern, by a glance at the balance sheet, any layman can in two or three minutes pick out which department of the trading concern is paying and which is losing. By the railway report which is before members it will be seen at a glance that an elaborate system of accountancy is followed. But the tables, on pages 65 to 95 are absolutely of no use. At all events, any member of the House can easily see that the time spent in preparing these returns would be more profitably employed in the direction which I have indicated. I defy any person who reads the Commissioner's report, which is published annually at huge cost, to deny my assertion, or to understand how this trading concern is being conducted, whether on sound financial lines or otherwise. While saying this, it is only fair for me to point out that, if the Commissioner was told to-morrow by the Arbitration Court to increase by another £50,000 the wages of his staff, he is bound by Act of Parliament to comply. Therefore, to give another £50,000 to his men it is necessary for him, if his accounts are to balance, to pass this amount on, and I am sure an increase of fares and freights is bound to come and will be passed on. I want to place these fares and freights on the shoulders of those best able to bear them. If the Commissioner's object is to increase the burden of taxation to the people at the furthest end of the goldfields, or in the back-blocks towns, such as there are in Western Australia, agricultural centres 200 or 300 miles from the coast, I can assure members the object the Commissioner has in view of increasing his revenue is going to be defeated, and for this reason. The war, during the last two or three years, has taken away some of the best manhood of the State in defence of the flag, and many of those brave men have left behind them, especially in the

country districts dependants, wives and young children, and any hon. member representing a country constituency can bear out my statement. During the last two or three years, it is regrettable to have to say it, owing to the increase in the cost of living, a number of families have migrated from the country to the capital. This is not in the best interests of the State and as long as that migration continues this country can never be prosperous. The Government will assuredly have to consider the matter of fares and freights in a very short time, and I would like members to agree to the motion standing in my name. The information was asked for in another place quite recently and refused, and one of the grounds for refusal was this, if I may be permitted to read a letter written by the Colonial Secretary. He says—

You asked me in the Legislative Council to supply the House with certain details of railway revenue and expenditure. In reply, I stated that to obtain the information asked for would necessitate the employment of three extra clerks for a month, at a cost of between £40 and £50, and that if you still desired the information you might move for a return. We were then almost at the end of the session, and in conversation I told you I would endeavour to obtain the particulars for you. The Commissioner of Railways now states that in any case, even if this expenditure were incurred, the return would not be accurate, and adds that it has always been the practice to refuse to supply similar information.

The Minister for Works: That is correct.

Mr. STUBBS: I do not know if it is correct, or not. It is not going to satisfy me. If half of the trouble taken to prepare the good-for-nothing tables in the report was employed in preparing particulars as to fares and freights to country towns, it would have a good result. The Colonial Secretary winds up the letter by saying that he regrets he cannot give the hon. member who asks for the information any satisfaction. I fail to see any reason why the work cannot be done at a nominal cost. An elimination of a great part of the annual report could with advantage be effected, and the work that I have indicated would, I am sure, guide hon. members very largely in the discussion that is sure to take place when the matter of increased fares and freights comes before us. Any hon. member who sees the straits into which the railways of the State will have fallen in the matter of finances at the end of the year, and sits idly by and does not take a hand in endeavouring to put his finger upon the spots that are weak, will not be doing his duty, and I feel sure that the good sense of hon. members will be sufficient to induce them to support me in this reasonable request.

Mr. Holman: What are you going to accomplish by this return?

Mr. STUBBS: If we get the information it will place hon. members in a position to put their finger upon the leakages.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why have you gone back to 1916; because the fertiliser rates are knocked off?

Mr. STUBBS: These have nothing to do with it. The Treasurer estimates that during the current 12 months there will be a deficiency between the railway revenue and expenditure of £500,000.

Hon. P. Collier: That includes interest and sinking fund.

Mr. STUBBS: I claim that the railways are carried on, as the Commissioner also says, as a business concern, and the Commissioner is expected to make the revenue and expenditure meet.

Mr. Holman: Will you close up sidings which are not paying?

Mr. STUBBS: I am not going to be sidetracked by any hon. member. My motion does not say that we are going to close anything, nor do I suggest the closing of anything.

Mr. Holman: I am merely asking for information.

Mr. STUBBS: Although the closing of sidings has nothing to do with the motion, I will inform the House that 12 months ago at a certain town on the Great Southern there were two station-masters employed at a railway station, and they had been employed there for many years. On a certain day in July the Railway Commissioner suddenly decided that the station should be closed up, and turned into an unattended siding. Of course there was great indignation, because it was not a siding which was going back, and was indeed a thriving agricultural centre. The Commissioner suddenly found out that the station was not paying, but he could easily have done so earlier. He could have decided that two men were not necessary and that one could have done the work. I never can understand why, at five minutes' notice, so to speak, the siding was closed up, and the two officers and all the paraphernalia of a railway station removed.

Hon. P. Collier: If you had called for national volunteers someone might have been found to attend to the station.

Mr. STUBBS: I am coming to that point. It was suggested that a returned soldier should be appointed. A public meeting was held at the centre, and a deputation came to Perth, to ascertain why this drastic step had been taken by the Commissioner without reasonable notice being given to the people interested. The Commissioner, I believe, told the deputation that, on the ground of economy, he was going to close up quite a number of other stations of a similar nature. I know there are several stations along the Great Southern, which do not handle anything like the business that this particular station did, and yet these stations are still being manned by officers. The Railway Commissioner was informed by the roads board that they would, during the few slack months, pay in advance for the services either of a station-master or a porter. The Commissioner, however, point-blank refused their request, on the ground that it would establish a dangerous precedent. The Commissioner offered, as an alternative, that if the people down there were so anxious to have a man at the station, they could appoint one themselves and pay his salary, and that he could have the use of the quarters.

Hon. P. Collier: Probably the Commissioner would charge rent for these quarters.

Mr. STUBBS: But the Commissioner would take no responsibility in connection with any of the goods handled either daily or nightly by this officer. The people refused to pay the salary of a man unless the Commissioner accepted responsibility for the receipt and delivery of parcels. Although this motion does not go into the question of the economical management of the railways, I claim that many economies could be practised in the department without impairing its efficiency. A good many of the pages of this annual report could easily be done without, and better business methods adopted so that hon. members could intelligently interpret the balance sheet or the annual report that is presented to them. I have no desire to harass the Commissioner or the Minister in any way, but think I have good ground for moving this motion, and believe that I shall receive the support of members of the House.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [8.23]: It is with some degree of diffidence that I rise to speak on a motion such as this, after what has occurred this afternoon and evening, relating to another motion of a similar kind. I do not desire to repeat the admonition administered to the member for Sussex by the Premier.

Mr. Stubbs: I can stand all that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not disposed to do it. At the same time the hon. member was hardly fair—

Hon. P. Collier: I am sure our consistency will be gone this time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When he introduced into the debate in support of his motion matters of personal grievance relating to particular localities. It has been said during the last few days that the Minister of Railways was overloaded. I think the hon. member has overloaded his motion altogether. I would remind him that similar requests have been made, as pointed out by the Colonial Secretary to the Hon. H. Stewart, and have been refused by all Governments. The hon. member has criticised the report which is prepared and presented to Parliament by the Commissioner of Railways. That report is ordered to be produced by Act of Parliament. The Commissioner was appointed under the Railways Act of 1904, and is required to prepare and present to Parliament an annual report. That annual report has been accepted by Parliament ever since the year 1904-5, and it has been practically in the same form as it is presented to-day. It is presented in this form because it synchronises with the reports of other countries, and comparisons can be made as to the relative degrees of success of railway management in different places. In moving his motion the hon. member doubtless had in mind a very excellent motive, but must remember that to a large extent his requirements are already set out in the report. If he will go carefully through that report he will find a mass of information for which he now asks, although it may not be in the form required, and he may have some difficulty in searching for it, and finding it in the same way that a

man acquainted with railway management would do. One of the reasons why I have to object to this motion is on the score of expense. To prepare this information would need not only an army of clerks for months, but it would necessitate practically the whole of the books of the railways being re-audited for the year 1916.

Hon. P. Collier: It is utterly impossible to give it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would be very costly to furnish, and it would be impossible to give the information with any degree of accuracy. The overhead charges could only be distributed between the various traffics by guess work, and that would be unsatisfactory and might lead to conclusions being drawn which were not accurate. Indeed, such information might mislead the House altogether in coming to a determination on the subject suggested by the motion. The Colonial Secretary pointed this out to the Hon. H. Stewart in his letter, which was read by the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs). I would ask the hon. member to reconsider his proposal in the light of what I have just stated. If the hon. member will make a careful perusal of the report supplied by the Commissioner he will get such information as will help him in determining that upon which he desires to satisfy himself, and will in this way save the country some expense.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.30]: I have much pleasure in seconding the motion. To-night we have heard a good deal about consistency; and I naturally expect that the leader of the Opposition, having taken some members on this side to task on that score, will support the present motion, just as he did the previous motion.

Hon. P. Collier: I shall exhibit my consistency by opposing this motion.

Mr. THOMSON: The motion is of vital importance to the country at the present time. We have had an intimation from the present Government that it is proposed to increase railway fares and freights; and that is a matter seriously affecting the country districts. The old haphazard method of simply saying that railway freights and fares shall be increased by 5 per cent.—

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is in order in discussing proposed increases in railway freights and fares on this motion.

Mr. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to give my reasons for supporting the motion. The information which would be available from the return asked for would afford members an opportunity of coming to a conclusion whether the proposals of the Railway Department are reasonable and just. I have been consistent. In 1915 I dealt with this question, and endeavoured to arrive at the amount of money expended on metropolitan and country areas in this respect. I further drew the attention of the House to the curious anomaly that those people who travelled 12 miles on country railways paid 1s. 11d., while those who were fortunate enough to reside in the metropolitan area paid only 1s. 2d. for a similar distance, and, actually, on three days per week travelled

that distance for 10d. Moreover, metropolitan residents have much more comfortable trains and a much more efficient service. I do not for a moment say that they should not have those facilities; but the Commissioner's report for the year 1915 contains the statement that suburban traffic was being carried at a loss.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: He made that direct statement.

The Minister for Railways: For what year was that?

Mr. THOMSON: The year 1915.

The Minister for Railways: Fares in the metropolitan area have been increased since then.

Mr. THOMSON: But not to the rate that people in the country districts have to pay. Let me read to the House what the Commissioner stated—

In the case of the suburban traffic the difficulty is that full loads for complete train journeys are out of the question, with the consequence that the receipts derived from the very low fares paid by those who fill the train for a small portion of its run are not sufficient to cover the cost of the complete run to its terminus.

I presume the Commissioner knows more about the inner workings of the railway system than does any member of this House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But you have gone back three years.

Mr. THOMSON: I venture to say the same position obtains to-day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I say it does not.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for North-East Fremantle makes a bald assertion, of which he has no proof.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, I have.

Mr. THOMSON: The proof to me will be provided by the return here asked for, if it is provided at all. Should the position prove to be as the member for North-East Fremantle has stated, then certainly we on the cross benches will be satisfied. I trust the House will support the demand for the required information. I appeal to goldfields members for support, because the raising of railway freights and fares will mean that their constituents will pay more than their just share. The people of the metropolitan area have had greater privileges and advantages in the matter of railway travel than the residents of the back country. If it is the intention of the Government to increase railway fares and freights, then I say in all earnestness that the burden should be placed equally on the shoulders of all the people. Let hon. members view the increases made by the previous Administration. That Government increased railway freights by 10 per cent.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Which increase you supported.

Mr. THOMSON: I did not. I protested against it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You did support it. You turned dog just at election time.

Mr. THOMSON: I have always protested against the action of the Government in increasing railway freights and fares. I do not wish to digress from the motion; but we have new members in the House, and upon them I

wish to impress the object or the mover and myself in bringing forward this motion. We are desirous of ascertaining whether the burden of taxation placed upon the community through the Railway Department is being distributed justly and equitably. We are not able to arrive at a conclusion on that point from the information available in the Railway Commissioner's report. True, the report is a valuable document, and I am pleased that we have it. Still, it does not give all the information required. The Minister has stated that the report does give all the information required. I have studied this question closely, and I have not been able to obtain from the Railway Commissioner's report the information sought for by this motion. The Minister has further said that the question is one of expense; that he objects to this motion because to obtain the information will mean putting on an army of clerks. There appears to have been a remarkable change of opinion in the Railway Department. In a letter written by the Colonial Secretary only a few weeks ago, it was stated, presumably on the authority of the Railway Department, that to obtain the required information would cost about £50. Now the Minister for Railways warns the House that it will cost the country a large amount of money for an army of clerks. The Railway Department ought to be in a position to give this information, which we have a right to demand in the interests of the State and especially in the interests of the country districts. I will not labour the question, upon which I have spoken before in this House. But I do assert that when the Railway Department propose to increase freights and fares, care should be taken that the burden shall be distributed over all the citizens equally, that the burden shall not be thrown almost entirely on the man who has gone into the back blocks to blaze the track.

Mr. Holman: Will you oppose any increases in railway charges on the people outback?

Mr. THOMSON: The matter is one affecting not only my electors, not only the whole of the farming community, but also the whole of the goldfields community. It is just as vitally important to the constituency which the hon. member interjecting represents or misrepresents, as to mine.

Mr. Green: There is no provision in this motion for the goldfields.

Mr. THOMSON: Let the member for Kalgoorlie refer to paragraph 1 of the motion—

The revenue and expenditure for passenger and coaching traffic on the Government railways for the year ended the 30th June, 1916, (a) on the metropolitan-suburban section; (b) on traffic from the last mentioned area to the country.

If the goldfields are not in the country, where are they?

Mr. Green: The goldfields are the whole country.

Mr. THOMSON: Then, what is the hon. member complaining about? I look with confidence to the member for Kalgoorlie and other members representing the goldfields to support this motion.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [8.40]: I have raised this subject myself twice previously in this House; but, unfortunately, on those

occasions I was unable to enlist the support of members who are now so strenuous in their advocacy in obtaining this return.

Mr. Thomson: Surely you can support the obtaining of the return now.

Mr. GREEN: I like consistency. Above all, I like honesty. I doubt whether a return applying to 1916 is the return which this House and the country require. If a return is required, it should be for the latest year, 1917.

Mr. Stubbs: Make it 1917, then.

Mr. GREEN: If the mover is prepared to alter his motion in that particular, I shall be prepared to support him.

Mr. Stubbs: Move an amendment.

Mr. GREEN: I recognise that I have been told by previous Administrations, including a Labour Government, that it was practically a matter of impossibility to obtain these returns.

Mr. Thomson: Why should it be?

Mr. GREEN: I admit at once that the amount of work involved in the preparation of a return of this character would be immense. It is only fair to make that admission. When we hear a chorus to that effect from members occupying, or who have occupied, the Treasury bench, we must recognise that there is a great deal of force behind the argument. What we have to consider tonight is whether the benefit to this House and to the country from the preparation of the return would be commensurate with the cost. On the principle of what is right and what seems good business, from a purely commercial point of view, it has struck me in the past, and it strikes me now—without being in a position to know the cost of the preparation of the return—that no business concern such as Boas or Foy & Gibson, or any other large commercial undertaking in this town, but is in a position to tell the cost each department is bearing in overhead charges. To me it seems absurd to suggest that an astute business man, like Mr. Boas, for instance, would not be able to arrive at what, say, the land agency portion of his business was costing and was returning. And similarly throughout the dozen and one branches of his business. The same thing applies to Foy & Gibson, and to the large mines on the goldfields.

The Minister for Works: The cases are quite different.

Mr. GREEN: I am prepared to admit that the analogy cannot be very close.

The Minister for Works: There is no analogy at all.

Mr. GREEN: I claim there is some analogy; and to me it seems peculiar that the Railway Department are the only business undertaking in the State to say that returns of this character cannot be supplied.

Mr. Smith: The department would do as they have done on previous occasions, and guess at the information.

Mr. GREEN: I am inclined to think, moreover, that in the large railway systems of the United Kingdom and the United States, which are privately owned, the managers know to a penny—

The Minister for Works: How do they get at the information?

Mr. GREEN: I say, the managers know to a penny what each section of their lines is costing to work and what revenue it is earning.

The Minister for Works: Admitting that they do know, how do they get at it?

Mr. GREEN: If certain lines are opened for the development of this country, and if we find from these sectional returns that such lines are being run at a cost so much above the revenue they are earning, that in itself would furnish the best of arguments for having the information supplied to the House. With that information hon. members would be able to say whether it is judicious to continue running a particular line.

The Minister for Works: Do you know that that information is contained in the Commissioner's report?

Mr. GREEN: I know that that information is given by the Commissioner's report in regard to spur lines. But that fact only supports me in my argument, and buttresses my contention that the information asked for by this motion should be supplied. If it is possible to supply such information with regard to the small spur lines, it should be accessible in respect of the whole of the railway system of Western Australia. If the Minister convinces the House by means of figures from the department or something of a definite character that it is impossible to furnish this return without incurring an expenditure of £50,000 or £60,000, I am prepared to let it drop, but until that information is supplied I shall support the motion.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [8.48]: The hon. member who has just sat down has referred to the railway companies in Great Britain and America and declared that they knew to a fraction of a dollar or a shilling how they stood. That is perfectly true, but perhaps the hon. member does not know that in America and England and also on the Continent there is an establishment which is absolutely independent of the railways, and which is created for the purpose of apportioning the amount of expenditure to be charged against individual lines. Take the companies in England, such as the Great Western, the North Western, the Midland, the London and Brighton and others: all interchange traffic not only with passengers but with freight, and it is the business of the clearing houses to follow every article of traffic, whether it be goods or passenger, and apportion to the individual railway companies the amount due to them.

Mr. Green: That must be more complex than our system.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The men employed in those clearing houses are the highest paid railway officials of the world. They are all specialists and the information they require is supplied to them by station masters and others, and their business is to dissect it and locate it. The hon. member might ask whether this could not be done in this State. It could be done if the State were prepared to pay for it. If Parliament were satisfied



that the result would be commensurate with the cost it would be done. Let me explain to hon. members what happens now. Someone books at Fremantle for Bolgart. It seems a very easy matter to locate that fare, but let me tell hon. members how the fare is made up. A portion of it is charged under what is known as suburban rates. Another portion is charged under what is known as extra-suburban rates. Then another portion is charged as far as Clackline on the main line and then on the small section there is another charge. Practically the same thing has to be done with regard to freight. The amount of labour which would be involved in following up freight in the same way can be imagined. It would take an army of men to do it.

Hon. P. Collier: And it would be of no value when you got it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is a matter of opinion. If hon. members will turn to pages 82 to 89 of the Railway Commissioner's latest report they will find there an analysis of the whole of the transactions in connection with the individual stations, and there is not only a classification of the traffic, but there is also given the earnings of the different stations. The hon. member will say that that is all right, but it only tells us of the freight that goes from the stations; it does not tell us where it goes. The fact might be considered that there are about 500 stations in Western Australia, and if an analysis is required to show where every particle of traffic goes, a considerable amount of book keeping will have to be done. Perth sends away to those 500 stations, and all those stations would require to enter all these things up and make an analysis. It is the greatest difficulty in the world—at any rate it was so when I was Commissioner for Railways—to get men at railway stations to keep books with anything like the accuracy which hon. members would expect.

Mr. Maley: This matter has been referred to the railway people and they say the cost of the preparation of the return would not be more than £40.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will deal with that later. Let me go on to explain the difficulty the railways have with their employees. The men start as porters and cleaners, and eventually they work themselves up until they pass an accounts examination, and they become night officers and then officers in charge. I would ask any commercial man if he considered that to be enough training to enable any one of these men to keep a set of books on the double entry system. Hon. members know well that these men could not do it. Yet we would ask those men to keep separate accounts and prepare analyses for us which in older countries are entrusted to experts. It has been stated that the preparation of this return would cost £40. I have always stated that these returns can be furnished if the State is prepared to pay the cost, but in my opinion the cost is prohibitive, and it will be far and away beyond any usefulness which the return will serve. In the memorandum about the £40 I am cer-

tain that neither the Commissioner nor any other man could get the accounts of the railways for 12 months analysed for anything like £40 or even ten times £40. I do not think the records of the department would permit of the information being given accurately. It is a fact that the Commissioners of Australia have recognised that for all practical purposes the present system of accounts is adequate. The member for Wagin is desirous of seeing if he can locate where the losses on the railways occur; if they are in the suburban area well and good, and if they are in the country areas well and good. In an appendix to his report the Commissioner for Railways shows that the various spur lines of the State in the year ended 30th June, 1917, incurred a loss of something like £80,000.

Mr. Stubbs: It must take up a lot of time to prepare that schedule.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is not so much in that schedule. It is not easy to separate the different portions of the main line. I am quite satisfied that if the Commissioner could furnish this information he would gladly do so. I would not object to supplying it if I were Commissioner of Railways, but to give an accurate statement such as is desired will involve an enormous expenditure and the returns we would get would not justify that expenditure.

Mr. Johnston: Are you sure the information is not there?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was not there in my time, and if it is there now I see no reason why the Commissioner should desire to withhold it.

The Minister for Railways: It is not there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So far as I am concerned I have always been prepared to give all the information possible to Parliament. In fact the complaint against me is that I have given too much.

Mr. Harrison: What is the meaning of the table on page 97 of the Commissioner's report? Does it refer to traffic in and out?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am seeing this return for the first time. So far as I can judge, it is simply a return of traffic that has gone from the terminus to where it joins the other line. If the other return is taken, it will be found that it is all outwards traffic.

Mr. Harrison: Both ways, I take it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I do not think so.

Mr. STEWART (Claremont) [9.1]: I am in accord with the attitude adopted by the Minister for Railways and the Minister for Works. I do not think we could attach much value to a statement showing particulars to the end of June, 1917; and because of the inherent lack of accuracy about a return of that nature, I must voice my opposition to the motion. I think we should wait until we hear something of the Government's policy in regard to railway freights and passenger fares, and not impose upon Ministers an expense which, if the return is to be of any value, would be quite incommensurate with the information it afforded. An analysis extending over a period of 12 months would neces-

sarily create an atmosphere of considerable difficulty. If hon. members desire this information at all times in the year, nothing will meet it but the creation of a new sub-department in the Railways. As has been shown by the Minister for Works, the practice of the Old Country, where the system is more complex, renders it necessary to employ a large number of men of expert capacity and knowledge, because of the interchange of traffic. How, may I ask, are we going to reconcile the figures which are to be produced relating to goods traffic from the country? How are we going to allocate that traffic to each station, except under such a scheme as the Minister for Works has outlined? This return, to be of any guidance whatever to those who seek to place the railways on a payable basis and make the sections and the community pay their proper contributions to the upkeep of the railways, must be correct, and it is inadvisable that the House should be expected to discuss the question of railway fares from a return which the Minister has said must necessarily be inaccurate, and, at best, can only be guess work. For one, I would decline to take part in any discussion which could lead to nowhere on a return shown to be so inaccurate.

Mr. Thomson: How can you say whether the proposed increases are just if you do not know what has obtained in the past?

Mr. STEWART: The management of the railways is entrusted to a Commissioner and I take it, until the House determines otherwise, that Commissioner will be allowed to manage the railways.

Mr. Thomson: The Government have expressed their intention to increase freights; surely we have a right to discuss that.

Mr. STEWART: It is for the Government to declare their policy, and thereafter, if it is desired by the House, to create a new department in the railways to provide this information. Let us do it then. But I submit we cannot expect any information which would assist us, or at least myself, in my contribution to the debate on railway freights and fares. I think hon. members will be placed in the same position when they look more fully into this question. I am in sympathy with the Minister for Railways in the attitude he has adopted. I submit that already the time of Ministers, and the revenue of the country, are sufficiently taxed in the presentation of this sort of information in answer to questions and motions served up to us from day to day. I enter a protest against the passing of the motion.

Mr. STUBBS (Wagin—in reply) [9.6]: I am very much surprised at the remarks that have fallen from the hon. member who has just sat down, seeing that he represents a metropolitan-suburban electorate; yet, after all perhaps, I ought not to expect anything else from him. I disagree entirely with the Minister for Railways and the Minister for Works. Either their views are incorrect, or another member of the Cabinet has been misinformed on the question. A few weeks ago the Colonial Secretary read a letter in which he stated that the information I am asking for would cost from £40 to £50. To-night the

Minister for Works told the House that it would cost hundreds of pounds, and even then would be inaccurate. I maintain that the information I desire can be obtained, notwithstanding anything the Minister for Works has said. In 1915 the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), speaking on the Railway Estimates, quoted the Commissioner's report as follows:—

In the case of the suburban traffic, the difficulty is that full loads for complete railway journeys are out of the question, with the consequence that the receipts derived from the very low fares paid by those who fill the train for a small portion of the run are not sufficient to cover the cost of the complete run to the terminus.

The hon. member went on to say—

The Premier was good enough to let me have the return I asked for, and it may be news to members to know that in the metropolitan area the number of passengers travelling within the inner suburban area last year was 13,280,380, and in the outer suburban area 103,677.

If a return of that nature can be obtained without much cost, I fail to see the objection of the Minister for Railways to my motion. With the staff the railways have, the work would not entail anything like the expenditure that the Minister tried to make the House believe. I am led to the conclusion that the Commissioner does not wish to supply the figures. On the question of the managerial control, I must say that the annual report of the railways is very convincing. We have owned the tramways for the last four years. Four years ago the profit on the tramways was a little over 4 per cent.; it has now dwindled to .77 per cent.

The Minister for Railways: Have you read the Commissioner's report in that respect?

Mr. STUBBS: Yes, I have read the whole of the report.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing tramways.

Mr. STUBBS: I maintain that this is a question affecting every country member of the House. In outback towns, 300 or 400 miles away, any increase in railway freights or fares will cripple industries. Therefore, every member representing a country constituency should support the motion.

The Minister for Railways: Does it not depend on the manner in which the increases are imposed?

Mr. STUBBS: I still maintain that the information I ask for will not cost the amount of money Ministers have alleged. I am going to press the motion, and I hope that hon. members will agree that the information asked for is likely to be of such value to them as will enable them to deal intelligently with the question of increased railway freights when they come up for discussion.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	..	24
Majority against					5

## AYES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Chesson	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Green	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Smith
Mr. Holman	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Maley
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Collier	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Davies	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Draper	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Roche
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Stewart
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Jones	Mr. Hardwick
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

#### MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST WAR SURTAX.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.15]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the following words contained in Regulation 115A, made by the Fremantle Harbour Trust on the 10th August, 1917, namely, 'when it shall be re-enacted or discontinued as circumstances dictate in the discretion of the Commissioners,' and passed by His Excellency the Governor in Council on the 17th August, 1917, be struck out from the said regulations."

I would point out that from what I can gather a mistake has been made in regard to the regulation which has been placed on the Table of the House dealing with the imposition of a surtax. I have no desire to take exception to such a surtax, as I believe this is a charge that has been put on since the war in almost every port throughout Australia. My contention in the matter is, however, that the Harbour Trust Commissioners in imposing this surtax endeavoured to get something into the regulation giving them complete control so far as that surtax was concerned. The proper method for the Harbour Trust to adopt, if they wished to alter the charges or to continue the charges made under the regulation, is that they should approach the Governor-in-Council for the purpose of making new regulations to re-enact or continue any charge additionally made, so far as the Trust is concerned. Such regulation has to be placed on the Table of the House in the proper manner, in order to give hon. members an opportunity of opposing it if they so desire, or approving of it. Hon. members will notice that in this regulation, which was made on the 10th August, 1917, these words are added to it, "when it shall be re-enacted or discontinued as circumstances

dictate in the discretion of the Commissioners." No regulation governing any other public body, that is, a semi-Government institution, gives such power or discretion in regard to charges which are made. The position to-day is that, though this is probably not being done, a regulation has been made to continue the surtax as from the 31st December, 1917. I drew the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the matter, and pointed out to him that a definite date must be set down when legislation of this kind shall expire, and a Bill must be brought in for it to continue longer if this is desired. I pointed out that this power was obtained by the Commissioners without the approval of the Government, and that they could at any time discontinue the charges of 20 per cent., whether the Government desired this to be done or not. I maintain that the Government should have the say so far as these charges are concerned. No special board managing a semi-Government department, similar to the Harbour Trust, should have full power and right to say whether any charges should be curtailed or not. The matter should be left entirely in the hands of the Governor-in-Council, that is the Government in control for the time being. That is my reason for moving that these words be deleted from the regulation which was made. I believe the intention was, in making the new regulation, that only the words "the regulation made on 10th August, 1917, should be continued to a certain date" should be re-enacted. In re-enacting this they have re-enacted the whole of the regulation, and placed the matter entirely at the discretion of the Harbour Trust Commissioners. My motion is not in opposition to the Commissioners or to any action of the Government. I believe this is purely a mistake, and that the matter was overlooked in framing the second regulation. I desire to have the power retained that this tax cannot be removed at any time without the consent of the Governor-in-Council. The regulation should be disallowed, or discontinued in the usual manner by Executive Council minute passed through the Council.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister) [9.23]: The Government have no serious objection to this motion being carried, but it will have no effect. As a matter of fact the regulation which the hon. member proposes to amend has been re-enacted, and the words as they are here now really have no meaning. I thank the hon. member for calling attention to the matter, and quite agree that the Harbour Trust have no right to use words of that description. They did not, however, act upon these words, or attempt to act upon them, and the Government have no intention of allowing them to do so, or anything of the sort. The Government realise fully that the harbour was constructed by moneys provided by the people of Western Australia, and that the people of Western Australia are represented in this Parliament, notwithstanding what the Harbour Trust may say about it. This Parliament, and the Government controlled by this Parliament, have the right of appointing that Harbour Trust, and having the right to ap-

point, also have the right to remove. Regulation 115a, 1914, reads—

Owing to conditions brought about by the European war, all wharfage, pilotage, port dues, storage charges, and harbour improvement rate charges are subject to a special war surtax of 20 per cent. upon the amount of the dues or charges, which may become payable under the headings mentioned. This surtax will continue in operation till the 31st December, 1917, when it shall be re-enacted or discontinued as circumstances dictate in the discretion of the Commissioners.

The last sentence is the one objected to by the hon. member. It has possibly to be re-enacted as circumstances dictate by the Commissioners, but certainly with the consent of Executive Council, and according to the Act it cannot be re-enacted in any other way. These papers are laid on the Table, and the language used is as follows:—

Regulation 115a, made by the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners, dated the 10th day of August, 1917, imposing a special war surtax of 20 per cent. upon the amount of dues or charges which may become payable to the Trust, as therein defined, is hereby re-enacted, to remain and continue in operation as from the 31st December, 1917.

The words, however, have no effect. I repeat that so far as this harbour is concerned, the Government contend that they have full control over it, and intend to continue to have that control. When it comes to the question of whether the Trust is showing a profit or a loss, we intend to work that harbour as other public works are managed, for the development of this country. I have no objection to the motion, and am sorry the Harbour Trust put in the language they did.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle—in reply) [9.27]: I only wished to point out that in re-enacting the second regulation the Harbour Trust re-enacted the whole of the regulation as it stood. A new regulation altogether should have been framed and the other one repealed. I drew the attention of the Minister to the fact, and feel sure that a mistake has occurred.

Question put and passed.

#### MOTION—CASE OF HUGH McLEOD, COMMISSION TO INQUIRE.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [9.29]: I move—

“That in the opinion of this House, the Government should appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the case of Hugh McLeod, who was dismissed, and subsequently reinstated, from the railway service: the Commission to have power to make full inquiry into the whole case, and to have power to recommend compensation, or other action they consider advisable in the interests of justice.”

I do not intend to speak as fully on this motion as I spoke on a previous motion

dealing with the same subject, when I moved for a select committee. I intend merely to state briefly the facts of the case as they affect Mr. McLeod, and any other officer of the Railway Department, in regard to securing justice from the railway appeal board as at present constituted. I do hope that if the Government are going to oppose the granting of a Royal Commission, they will at least give some reason for their objection. On the occasion of my moving for a select committee, the then Minister for Railways was not in the House while I spoke. The Honorary Minister of the day, Hon. J. D. Connolly, replied for the Minister for Railways. I listened carefully to his reply, without hearing even one reason given for objecting to the appointment of a select committee, other than that such a course would be tantamount to making an appeal court of this House. The present Minister for Works was also at that time Minister for Railways, and he raised the objection that an offer made by the then leader of the Opposition, Mr. Scaddan, while Minister for Railways, to Mr. McLeod was a fair one and should have been accepted by Mr. McLeod. I propose to deal a little more fully with those aspects of the matter. I appeal to the Minister, if he has real grounds for objecting to further inquiry into the case, to let the House know what those grounds may be. I must go back to the 14th March, 1914, when this trouble first arose. On that date Mr. Davies, district traffic superintendent for the South-West, was travelling from Perth to Albany. On the train was a ticket collector named Sullivan. During the journey Mr. Davies became suspicious of three persons travelling—suspicious as to the tickets on which they were travelling; and he asked Mr. Sullivan to make inquiry and have the tickets examined. This Sullivan did. On arrival at Torbay Junction Mr. Davies got out of the train and attempted for some considerable time, but without success, to raise Albany station on the telephone. Then he had a conversation with Sullivan. Sullivan thereupon went to McLeod and handed him a piece of paper bearing the numbers 394 and 399. He asked McLeod to keep on ringing up Albany, in order to get the police on the railway station there as soon as possible. Naturally McLeod came to the conclusion that the police were wanted in order that the three travellers might be handed over to them on a charge of travelling on “crook” tickets. McLeod succeeded in getting Albany on the telephone after the train had left Torbay Junction, and also succeeded in securing the presence of four police constables on the Albany railway station. On the arrival of the train at Albany Mr. Davies took those three passengers from the train to his office, and there questioned them regarding their tickets. McLeod over the telephone, through the Albany station master, insisted that the three passengers should be given in charge, because both the tickets were tickets which had to pass from Torbay Junction on to the Great Southern Railway or on to the Denmark line. Strange to say, Mr. Davies

refused to give the passengers in charge, saying, "No; I shall issue summonses against them." And he did issue summonses against the three men for travelling on "fake" railway tickets. When the day of hearing came along, he withdrew the charge against one of those passengers, named Garry. He proceeded with the charge against the other two, and on the 23rd March, 1914, they were each fined £10, with costs, for travelling on wrong railway tickets. When Mr. Davies was questioned why he withdrew the case against Garry, the explanation he gave was that he did not know what charge to lay against him. That seems to me a most remarkable thing, in view of the fact that he had discovered these three men travelling on identically the same tickets. He knew at the outset how to issue three summonses; but then he withdrew the summons against Garry, and got the other two men fined as I have said. Evidently those tickets aroused some suspicion in the minds of the leading officers of the Railway Department, a suspicion that something crooked was going on with blank paper return tickets. On the 6th April, Mr. Davies again appeared at the Torbay Junction railway station, went into the station master's office, and point blank accused McLeod of having forged those tickets. McLeod indignantly denied having had anything to do with the forgery of the tickets. He went out of the office and brought in the guard of the train, and then asked Mr. Davies, his superior officer, to repeat in front of a witness the charges he had made against him. This Mr. Davies point blank refused to do. He would not accuse McLeod in the presence of a third party of having forged the tickets. Things went on a little further, and the Chief Traffic Manager of that time, Mr. Neil Douglas, wired to Mr. McLeod asking to what station he had issued blank paper ticket 467 and on what date. McLeod replied by wire, stating that he had issued the ticket from Torbay Junction to Cranbrook. On the following day the Chief Traffic Manager wrote to McLeod asking him to confirm that statement in writing. This McLeod did. Almost immediately after, Mr. Davies again appears at the Torbay Junction station with Detective Ebbesen, and they accuse McLeod again of having interfered with those tickets. They asked McLeod to make a statement, and this statement was taken down in writing by Detective Ebbesen. After the statement had been made by McLeod, Mr. Davies suspended him. McLeod naturally thought that it was only fair he should have an inquiry. Therefore, immediately on his suspension, he wrote out a long statement to the Chief Traffic Manager himself. Being a railway officer, and an officer whom the files absolutely prove to be one that stuck on every occasion to the railway regulations, McLeod, instead of sending the statement direct to the Chief Traffic Manager, forwarded it, in accordance with the regulations, to Mr. Davies, the district traffic superintendent, for transmission to the Chief Traffic Manager. To that statement he received no reply. Thereupon he wrote to Mr. Davies asking on what date Mr. Davies had sent the statement to the Chief Traffic Manager. To that inquiry

he received no reply. Thereupon he wired to Mr. Davies inquiring what he had done with the statement. Again he received no reply. The eventual result was that McLeod wired direct to the Chief Traffic Manager himself on the subject. In reply he received the following letter from the Chief Traffic Manager, dated the 27th May, 1914. I shall read the original letter—

Mr. H. McLeod, Torbay Junction. On the 26th January, 1914, whilst station-master at Torbay Junction you issued • second-class return blank paper ticket No. 467, Torbay Junction to Cranbrook, fare 8s. 11d., and you altered the return portion to read "West Leederville to Torbay Junction," and the date to 19/12/1913, and the fare to £2 2s. 10d. I am also satisfied you altered the return half of second-class return holiday excursion blank paper ticket No. 394, which had been issued at Albany on the 6th February to Youngs, fare 3s. 2d., by inserting "Cottesloe to Albany," and "14/2/1914" as date, and £2 3s. 11d. as fare. Also the return half of second-class holiday excursion paper ticket No. 399 issued at Albany to Torbay Junction on the 21st February, fare 1s. 4d., by inserting "Fremantle" in lieu of Torbay, and date as 7/2/1914 and fare as £2 4s. 3d. For these grave irregularities it has been decided to dismiss you from the service as from the 2nd inst., the date on which you were suspended from duty. Please vacate the departmental house as soon as possible and hand in all other property of the Commissioner in your possession to the acting station-master at Torbay Junction. (Sgd.) Neil Douglas, Chief Traffic Manager.

I hope hon. members have paid sufficient attention to what I have said regarding the writing by Mr. McLeod of a statement putting his own case before the Commissioner and requesting an inquiry. After he was dismissed he succeeded in getting an inquiry by way of appeal; and, strange to say, Mr. Davies, the district traffic superintendent, absolutely admitted before the appeal board that he had suppressed the letter or statement written by McLeod to the Chief Traffic Manager.

The Minister for Railways: Davies admitted that?

Mr. MUNSIE: Davies admitted that he had suppressed the statement. When asked why he had suppressed it, the only reason or excuse he put forward was that he wanted to see what McLeod's next move would be. That is rather a remarkable attitude for a district traffic superintendent to adopt.

Mr. Stubbs: Did he admit that at the inquiry?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes. I have the file of evidence here. Having led up to the dismissal, I now come to the appeal case; and I want to emphasise the point that the whole of the case, as to McLeod's guilt or innocence, hinged on ticket No. 467. For the information of those hon. members—few though they be—who have not heard of this case before, let me say that the appeal board reinstated Mr. McLeod in his old position at

Torbay Junction. At the appeal Mr. McLeod was, as the evidence proves, most anxious to fathom where ticket No. 467 had come from. His representative tried to obtain from the department the information whether the ticket had been travelled on or not. That information was also refused before the Appeal Board. They then demanded the name of the person who handed the ticket in, and that was also point-blank refused. For at least 12 months after McLeod was reinstated, the whole of the negotiations go to prove that they were trying to side step McLeod by making out that the man who handed the ticket in had a pledge from the Chief Traffic Manager that his name would not be divulged, and at about that particular time, unfortunately, Mr. Douglas, who was Chief Traffic Manager, died. I believed that statement for some time until I got the evidence which was taken before the Appeal Board. In that evidence I found that in the examination of Mr. O'Connor, who was then chief clerk to the Chief Traffic Manager, that gentleman admitted that the ticket was handed not to Mr. Douglas but to him. The Appeal Board tried to get from Mr. O'Connor the name of the party who handed the ticket in to him but he refused to disclose it. He gave as a reason that if he mentioned the name it would defeat the ends of justice. In the interests of the safe working of the Railway Department in this State and particularly of the officers of the Railway Department, some inquiry should be held if only to clear Mr. Davies' character. The whole of the evidence before the Appeal Board looks pretty fishy so far as Mr. Davies is concerned.

The Minister for Works: Do you accuse Davies?

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not accusing anyone; I want an inquiry to compel Mr. O'Connor to disclose the name of the person who handed him the ticket.

The Minister for Works: You say that the evidence is fishy against Davies?

Mr. MUNSIE: I say that the evidence is fishy right through.

Mr. Davies: What was the result of the appeal?

Mr. MUNSIE: McLeod was reinstated by the Appeal Board.

Mr. Pickering: Does Davies want this Royal Commission?

Mr. MUNSIE: I have never consulted Mr. Davies. But after moving for the Select Committee on the previous occasion, Mr. Davies took exception to my remarks and the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) said he had seen Mr. Davies, and that Mr. Davies had remarked that he was quite willing that the inquiry should go on, so that he might clear himself.

Mr. Johnston: I did not say that; I said I had every confidence in Mr. Davies.

Mr. MUNSIE: I was rather surprised when I went to Albany for the purpose of getting hold of McLeod's private file to meet not one, but half a dozen railway officers on the journey down who knew what my business was, and who told me that the same thing applied throughout that portion of the State and particularly in Albany. The words used

were "It is common knowledge in Albany that Mr. Davies, whilst in possession of Mr. McLeod's blank paper ticket book, gave a demonstration in a public bar to show how easy it was to forge the tickets." When the matter came before the Appeal Board, Mr. Bryant, who was conducting the case for McLeod, asked Mr. Davies whether that was the case, and whether he was in the habit of giving demonstrations in public bars to show how easy it was to forge blank paper tickets. Mr. Davies denied it. The next question asked by Mr. Bryant was "Will you deny that you have ever given such an exhibition in a public bar in Albany?" and Mr. Davies replied "I will not."

The Minister for Works: You do not suggest that Davies forged these tickets?

Mr. MUNSIE: I suggest that he gave the public exhibitions referred to.

The Minister for Works: He could not have had those station books with him.

Mr. MUNSIE: I say he did. He had McLeod's blank paper book for four days. McLeod wired to get that book back, but received no reply.

The Minister for Railways: Was that before or after the accusation made against McLeod?

Mr. MUNSIE: That was between the suspension and dismissal.

Mr. Davies: Who was chairman of the Appeal Board?

Mr. MUNSIE: Mr. Roe. Mr. Connolly, when replying on behalf of the Government when the matter was last before Parliament, definitely stated that it was shown on the files that Mr. Roe, as chairman of the Appeal Board, had made a statement to the effect that if the case had been heard in Scotland a verdict would have been returned of "Not proven." That statement has been repeatedly made throughout the railway service, and the inference is that Mr. Roe thought McLeod guilty, but that the Appeal Board reinstated him out of leniency. I hope no hon. member in this House will take up that attitude. I know McLeod does not want it. If a Commissioner is appointed and it is proved, or even if there is a strong suspicion in the mind of the Commissioner of Railways, that McLeod is guilty, he has no right to be a station-master in Western Australia. I want McLeod's name cleared, or I want the charge sheeted home to him. At the present time McLeod is in this unfortunate position that he has been branded as a forger, a thief, and a liar by the Railway Department of Western Australia. The heads of the department have made use of the expression that if the case had been tried in Scotland a verdict of "Not proven" would have been returned, the inference as I said before, being that he is still believed to be guilty.

The Minister for Railways: Is that a correct inference to draw from a verdict of not proven?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes. With regard to that very question I have a file of correspondence between McLeod and the chairman of the Appeal Board, and in a letter, Mr. Roe, the chairman, indignantly denies that he ever made use of such a statement about

"Not proven." I do not know whether to believe the Minister who said that Mr. Roe had made that statement or to believe Mr. Roe who declares in a letter that he did nothing of the kind. I also desire to refer to another file. Mr. Connolly when opposing the motion for the appointment of a select committee moved on a previous occasion, quoted from the file a letter sent by the present leader of the Opposition, when Minister for Railways, to McLeod. Mr. Connolly stated that I misrepresented the Minister. I did nothing of the kind. I accused Mr. Collier who was then the Minister for Railways, of either not knowing or being misinformed when he wrote that letter to McLeod, because he stated in that letter what was an absolute untruth. I will read the first portion of that letter—

To H. McLeod, North Street, Victoria Park, 30th September, 1914. Sir—With reference to your letter of the 5th I have to advise you that it will serve no good purpose to enlighten you as to the name of the person who handed in the forged ticket in connection with the charge recently preferred against you. At the time it was given to the late Chief Traffic Manager, a promise was made that the name of the person doing so would not be divulged, and this undertaking I am bound to respect, more especially as the ticket was in no way associated with you, nor was your name suggested as in any way responsible for the forgery. It was not until some time after that you became involved, and I am glad to say were acquitted of the charge brought against you. Under the circumstances I think you will agree in silence being preserved on this point. Let me assure you, however, that the ticket was not put in as evidence against you.

That letter was signed by the Minister himself and he underlined the words "evidence" and "you" thus assuring McLeod that the ticket was not put in as evidence against him. Three days of the appeal board inquiry were taken up by the handwriting experts examining ticket No. 467, and then the Minister turns round and writes a letter such as that which I have read. What were the handwriting experts there for? One of the experts swore definitely at the outset that the ticket had been written by McLeod, and when challenged as to what authority he had for making that statement, he said he was an expert in these matters and would swear to that being McLeod's handwriting. Mr. Bryant, who was conducting the case for McLeod, asked that the experts be allowed some days, in which the worth of their evidence might be tested. The result was that another gentleman from Perth was asked to write a number of tickets, which he did. All of them and the information in connection with the tickets were submitted to the chairman of the appeal board. Six tickets were handed to one of the experts and he had to determine from them how many were in original handwriting and how many were copied, and whether they were all in McLeod's handwriting, or which were in his handwriting, and

how many had been forged. Mr. Roe said that to make absolutely sure he would number them. The handwriting expert was given 24 hours to deal with them. He came back and said that none of them had been traced, and that all had been written by McLeod. As a matter of fact none were written by McLeod, and four of the six were traced. It shows the value of the handwriting expert's evidence against McLeod.

The Minister for Railways: Assuming this was in evidence, it was justification for upholding the appeal.

Mr. MUNSIE: McLeod had been 12 years in the service when he was dismissed, and at that time he had in an application for transference which would have meant promotion. He is still in the service to-day, but he is at least £100 out of pocket in consequence of the treatment he has received, and he has had the bailiffs in his house at Torbay Junction.

Mr. Pickering: You said that McLeod does not want this commission.

Mr. MUNSIE: On the contrary, McLeod very earnestly desires it.

The Minister for Works: Of what value is the appeal board if its decisions are to be overridden?

Mr. MUNSIE: I would not wish to override the appeal board in ordinary cases, but in this case the man's liberty has been at stake; he has been charged with forgery.

The Minister for Railways: The appeal board exonerated him.

Mr. MUNSIE: No, they reinstated him, while refusing him costs. He had to employ a man to work up the case for him, and in addition there were lawyer's fees to be met. The Minister has asked, what is the good of the appeal board? In a case such as this, if I were a railway employee, charged with the same offence, I would not go before the appeal board with its present powers.

The Minister for Works: You have the choice.

Mr. MUNSIE: The hon. member opposed my motion for a select committee on the last occasion. He has been a member of the Government for 18 months since then, and he has not made any move to alter the position. When the decision was given the Railway Officers' Association, the Railway Employees' Association, and the Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Union, all in combination, went in a deputation to the Minister for Railways to ask for an amendment of the powers of the appeal board. It must be remembered that the man who forged the ticket, and the man who handed the ticket in to the Railway Department, are the only two men who could give direct evidence in the case. But when we come to the appeal board, and the accused person wants to know who handed in the ticket, the Railway Department refuse to give him the name, and there is no power to make them give it. Of what use is an appeal board of that character? What chance has any man before such a tribunal?

The Minister for Works: You asked the Railway Department to give you all their evidence.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister used that argument before. When the inquiry ended, two

men had been fined £10 each and costs, the third they refused to prosecute, and McLeod had been dismissed and reinstated. And then he comes along and makes a request of this description.

The Minister for Works: You will not allow any finality.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not going to rest content until I get some inquiry for this unfortunate man.

The Minister for Railways: With what object?

Mr. MUNSIE: To clear his character and give him a standing as a free man, which he has not to-day. No matter to what branch he may be transferred, many railway officers are likely to come along and cast slurs on his honesty.

Mr. Stubbs. They would not be men if they did.

Mr. MUNSIE: That is not the point. I want some authority to compel people to say what they know in connection with this case, to clear McLeod's character, and give him some compensation if he is innocent. Let me read what the Minister for Railways said in answer to the deputation. This was his reply—

With regard to the appeal court, and the amendment of regulations, I do not see that there can be any objection to that whatever. It seems to me that this board deals with matters of very great importance to the employees at times, inasmuch as it deals with their livelihood, or position, or standing in the department, and there should be some means of compelling a witness to come and give evidence material to the issue. If it is possible to obtain this by an amendment of the regulations, without an amendment of the Act, I shall have it done at once. It should have been possible for either yourself, or the Railway Department, to have power to deal with witnesses at the late inquiry, or any other inquiry, because very often the absence of any witness may result in an unjust decision being given. We do not want to see that continued. I will have inquiries made to see if it is possible to have your wishes met, and if it is possible to do it, by way of regulation, without amending the Act, I shall have it done.

That is the reply of the then Minister, Mr. Collier. The only other point I wish to refer to is the statement made by the present Minister for Works and also by Mr. J. D. Connolly, who was then Honorary Minister, speaking on behalf of the Minister for Railways. He contended that McLeod should have accepted the offer made by Mr. Scaddan, the then Minister for Railways. The offer made by Mr. Scaddan was that he was quite prepared to grant McLeod an opportunity of going before the appeal board again, with a new chairman, Mr. Davies having taken the place of Mr. Roe. But what other evidence could Mr. McLeod have submitted to that board, unless he could get the name of the man who handed in the ticket? Except he had the power to compel the other man to give the desired evidence, he

would have been mad to have again gone before the board.

The Minister for Works: How can you compel a dead man to give evidence?

Mr. MUNSIE: The ticket was handed in to Mr. O'Connor, as admitted before the board. I appeal to members to give Mr. McLeod an opportunity for clearing his character. I want also to give other officers of the Railway Department, against whom there is grave suspicion at present, an opportunity for clearing their characters.

The Minister for Works: Who entertains these suspicions?

Mr. MUNSIE: Suspicion is in the minds of dozens of railway employees to-day. The Minister only requires to travel down the Great Southern to find out where the suspicions are in connection with this case. Personally I am not wedded to a Royal Commission. I would be perfectly satisfied to accept a select committee, provided I get an assurance from the Government that the select committee will have power to compel witnesses to answer questions. A Royal Commission can compel a man to say "who handed the ticket in," and if he will not answer can put him in gaol. I want the same power conferred upon a select committee, and that such select committee shall compel witnesses to give evidence and answer questions, especially when it has been admitted that the ticket has been handed in. I am absolutely satisfied that I could tomorrow put my hand on the man who handed that ticket in, and I believe I know why he put it in. I have much pleasure in moving the motion standing in my name.

On motion by the Minister for Railways, the debate adjourned.

#### MOTION—RABBIT PEST, SELECT COMMITTEE TO INQUIRE.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [10.17]: I move—

"That in view of the alarming position created by the rabbits, a select committee of this House be appointed to immediately inquire into the present system adopted by the department for combating the pest, with a view of recommending more effective methods of dealing with this national menace."

It seems to be the practice to-night, in respect to private motions, that an assurance should be given to the Government that the mover of the motion has no intention of harassing them. I, too, have no intention, in moving this motion, of in any way harassing them. It may seem strange that two hon. members of this House should follow each other in giving notice of motions of a similar nature. I had no knowledge of the intention of the member for York (Mr. Griffiths) to move this motion. I had already spoken to some members of the Country party, but that was before the debate on the Address-in-reply was concluded. I understand it is not competent for any member to give notice of motion of this sort until the Address-in-reply is finished, but as soon as that debate was over I took the first opportunity of giving the necessary notice of mo-



tion. It is admitted that we have had rabbits in Western Australia for a number of years, but I do not think they have hitherto reached the numbers they have now reached. We are supposed to have a rabbit department, whose duty it is to cope with the pest and keep it within measurable bounds; yet we find this year that the rabbits have taken control of the rabbit department. That department to my mind has been caught napping, and rabbits are increasing to an enormous extent. They are being discovered in all sorts of places where their presence was unsuspected. We have rabbits down at the coast, well away from the No. 2 fence, and unless some steps are taken to deal with the pest in a proper and up-to-date manner, the rabbits will become practically a national disaster in this State. I do not say that the department is altogether to blame for the present condition of affairs. Perhaps it is undermanned, or it may be short of funds and unable to carry out the work necessary for coping with the pest. Hon. members will agree with me that the position has become so serious that it is our duty to investigate it and ascertain if the department is doing all that could be done, and if not, to suggest some method of coping with the pest. I do not desire to hamper the Government in what they are doing, but am certain that a few suggestions from practical men who might be examined on this question would be the means of rendering a considerable amount of assistance to the Government in dealing with the matter. Judging from what has appeared in the Press lately, the Minister for Agriculture seems to be pinning his faith to poison carts, and appears to think that this will settle the rabbits. I do not agree with the Minister on this point, because from the experience of other States which have gone in for poison carts, the poison has been the means not only of destroying rabbits, but also of destroying very largely the bird life of the State, and disturbing the balance of nature. The birds in the bush living on the maggot fly and carrion generally, were destroyed by the poison, with the result that the maggot fly increased to a considerable extent, and now these States are paying the penalty for this interference with nature, and the destruction of birds which were the scavengers of the maggot fly.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. Harrison: What other method would you suggest in preference to poison?

Mr. SMITH: No doubt if the hon. member was called to give evidence before the select committee he would be able to make some very valuable suggestions. The Rabbit Department, for some reason best known to themselves, are strangely averse to rabbits being trapped for food. That is a mistake, and I think there are great possibilities in the direction of allowing farmers to trap rabbits and send them to Perth and elsewhere, to supply a very necessary article of diet. In addition to the food side of the question, there is the wealth which may be derived from the sale and use of the skins and the manufacture of articles from the fur. The rabbit question is a very serious one. Many

farmers have been compelled to abandon their holdings in the wheat belt on account of the encroachment of the rabbits. Many of these holdings, too, are the securities for loans granted by the Agricultural Bank, and the result may be that the bank, and through the bank the State, may lose a considerable sum of money unless steps are taken to deal with the question. I took the opportunity recently of going through a portion of the wheat belt, particularly that portion of the State which is infested by rabbits. I was quite surprised at the number of rabbits I saw there. Most of the farms are absolutely abandoned, and no one is living on them at all. The few settlers I saw and interviewed were unanimous in stating that, unless the Rabbit Department did something to put down the pest, they also would be compelled to leave their holdings and throw their securities on the hands of the Agricultural Bank. When we find this state of affairs, it is our duty as custodians of the public purse, to immediately inquire as to what is being done by the Rabbit Department. My motion contemplates the appointment of a select committee. Select committees are not so expensive as Royal Commissions, and there is not the same objection to a select committee of the House as there is to a Royal Commission. Members of select committees are not paid any fees, and they are practically inexpensive, and must conclude their labours before the House rises. A select committee must finish their work and submit their report to the House before the conclusion of the session, otherwise it lapses. Without any further remarks, I will content myself with moving the motion standing in my name.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [10.13]: I second the motion, and at the same time wish to withdraw the motion standing in my name on the Notice Paper. My reason for giving notice of the motion I did was the extreme urgency of the matter. It is a matter which will not brook delay, and the magnitude of this evil is imposing upon the present Minister a task which, in my opinion, will be more than he can cope with. The rabbits have taken possession of a very large portion of the State, from Gascoyne to Northampton, and right through various electorates as far down as Katanning. Hon. members will thus see that there is practically an immense province in their possession. I do not think it will be necessary for me to quote cases to prove to hon. members how great the ravages are that are being committed by the rabbits.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Crawford says they are not doing any harm.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Certain hon. members received a deputation at Kondinin a little while ago, when 14 settlers placed figures before us, showing that they had lost something like 4,325 bags of wheat this season. I came down in the train recently with a settler named W. M. Gordon, who has been eaten out completely. Off 320 acres he only had 140 bags of wheat, in a district where the crops were going 20 bushels to the acre. This will give some idea of what the rabbits

can do. I want a select committee, not for the purpose of embarrassing the Minister.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Do not apologise.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Never mind about that. I say what I mean in this House. I think that the select committee will be of assistance to the Minister, and that he is now being called upon to face a situation which has been brought into being by the neglect of previous administrations. In the past it has not been realised that the rabbits would increase as they have done. In the past it was asserted that the poison and the dry seasons would never allow the rabbits to increase to anything like the same extent as in the Eastern States. Now the peril is so great, and the position so acute, that nothing should be left undone in the way of inquiry. It is all very well to say that everything necessary is being done. We have had that sort of assurance before. Many such assurances have been given by past Ministers in all good faith. Sympathy is no good for coping with the rabbit evil. I have already reminded the House that an interim report dealing with this matter was placed before the Government in November, 1916. While there is much in that report which, on account of the lack of wire netting, could not be put into operation, still there is a great deal in the report that could be done to cope with the evil. What we are witnessing to-day is really the result of the past failure to grasp the magnitude of the evil.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not you think the very wet season has had a great deal to do with the increase of the evil?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes. Some seven years ago I visited, in company with Mr. Sutton, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, the holding of Mr. Brayshaw. Mr. Sutton and I admired the very fine rabbit-proof fence Mr. Brayshaw had put up, and Mr. Sutton expressed some surprise that Mr. Brayshaw had incurred so much expense. Mr. Brayshaw said, "The rabbit is not going to alter his habits in this State; he will be the same here as in the Eastern States; I am going to keep him out; he is not going to get hold of my property." At the present date in the Eastern areas, around Mount Marshall, the Industries Assistance Board will not advance money for the putting in of crops, because, they say, it will not be a commercial proposition—the crops will simply serve to fatten up the rabbits. There are so many different opinions on this subject. I have heard hon. members ask, "Why not go in for trapping the rabbits?" The mover of this motion has advocated trapping. In regard to trapping, it seems to me an anomaly that we should have to pay half-a-crown a pair for rabbits here when there are thousands of them in the Eastern districts. In Victoria at the beginning of last year the poisoning was stopped, on the ground that the rabbit industry was such an important one and was bringing in so much wealth; on the ground that the rabbit industry was a good commercial proposition and should be encouraged in every way. The Victorian Minister at the time demurred somewhat, but he al-

lowed the poisoning regulations to be relaxed; and to-day Victoria is again faced with the old rabbit peril, and has to spend thousands of pounds in order to get it under control. The same thing applies in all Australian States which have treated the rabbit as a commercial proposition. New South Wales is another case in point. On the other hand, those States which have not encouraged the rabbit from a commercial point of view, to-day have the rabbit peril well in hand. The problem is so big that no Minister, even with the best intentions in the world, can cope with it by himself. Certainly I give our Minister every credit for what is being done, and acknowledge that he is putting great energy into his work. It is no use, however, our starting operations against the rabbits only after next season's crop is in. We want to be satisfied now that this great evil is being grappled with as it should be. If all that is required is actually being done, nothing but kudos will accrue to the gentleman controlling the rabbit branch. The Minister, no doubt, is doing his utmost; but the thing is too big. That will be recognised by anyone who sees the vast properties which have been taken possession of by the rabbits. It will be recognised by anyone who knows the variety of problems connected with the pest. The select committee, if appointed, can assist the Minister. I have already told the Minister, and so has the mover, that it is not our intention to embarrass him in any way. On the contrary, we want to help him, if possible. If we found that in any respect the rabbit branch have not done what it is up to that branch to do, then we would make such recommendations as might be justified by the evidence, and assist the Minister with advice accordingly. We know that all the States of the world are now thinking of increased production. In this State of Western Australia, however, the advice to increase production seems to have been taken only by the rabbits. Let me mention a little fact which will give hon. members some idea of the rabbit's powers of increase. A friend at Mount Marshall writes to me that on his holding he poisoned during this last season 4,424 rabbits. He is a great man for figures, and he has calculated that with the embryos that figure represents a total of 11,314 rabbits destroyed just on that one holding. One thing that should be done is to get every roads board made a vermin board, with power to raise money to enable them to deal with the pest. All sorts of reports come in from the back country, and one is that the fencing of dams is of no use because the rabbits get in through gaps.

The Premier: That is largely due to people leaving the gates open.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is so, but the gaps in the fences are responsible for the trouble, and it is a matter on which the committee would urge co-operative effort on everyone connected with the farming industry, so as to assist the Minister and the department in coping with the pest. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [10.37] In supporting the motion, I wish to point out to the House that the State has been expending on the maintenance of the rabbit fence with interest and sinking fund charges an amount of £30,000 per annum. Hon. members are aware that since 1915, the first year after the drought, there have been phenomenally regular returns of summer rains. The storm at the end of January, 1915, threw down over 40 miles of the rabbit proof fence in various places between Lynton and to the south of Cunderdin, on the Eastern Goldfields Railway. The fence was lying flat on the ground, for considerable distances in one stretch. The only attempt to effect repairs, and to re-erect that section, was made by the permanent staff maintained by the rabbit branch. The repairs took some considerable time, in those circumstances. I may instance the statement of a squatter on the line of the fence, who had mustered sheep out of a paddock on his own side of the fence, finding he was between 300 and 400 short. Four months afterwards he found these sheep in a neighbour's paddock on the other side of the fence. If the sheep could get through a portion of the fence in those numbers in that particular area, it is reasonable to suppose that during the same time a great wave of rabbits would come through. In my own district, Greenough, rabbits have been visible in considerable numbers for the last 10 years. I contend that inside the fence there are rabbits from Carnarvon down to Busselton in the South-West. We are endeavouring to combat this pest under the Act which was framed, but that is impossible as it is absolutely obsolete. It was framed long before the rabbits came here. A person can be fined for having rabbits in his possession dead or alive. Only a few days ago a live rabbit, caught at North Dandalup, was taken by an enthusiastic settler to the office of the Honorary Minister merely for the purpose of letting the Minister see that rabbits were quite close to the city. The Minister pointed out to the man that he was liable to a fine of £100 for bringing a live rabbit into the city, and that if he or anyone did such a thing again the law would be put in motion against him. In the district which I represent steps should be taken immediately to carry on poisoning; trapping is useless. When traps are set, more cats and bandicoots and sheep are caught than rabbits. The only effective way of dealing with the pest is to adopt means of simultaneous poisoning in the areas from Mt. Marshall to Northampton. Spasmodic poisoning is of no value because it is a well known fact that after the first taste of the poison the survivors seem to be able to communicate to the others the fact that there is something to be avoided, and instinct teaches them that the poison is to be avoided. Immediate steps should be taken, because if any rain falls within the next few weeks the whole effect of poisoning will be destroyed, on account of the green feed which will spring up. Rabbits will not take poison when there is green feed to be had. The select committee should lose no time in making its recommendations. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [10.45]: I hope the Government will not offer any objection to the appointment of the select committee, and I also hope that in the meantime they will not spare any effort to destroy the pest. When the outer fence was erected 15 years ago it was found then that rabbits had got ahead of it. Then the second fence was built. For 15 years the rabbits have been kept away from that portion of the State inside the second fence, but in the last two or three years they have increased rapidly in numbers. To my mind it is not the poison that kills them; it is the tannic acid in the bark of the trees which they must eat during the dry season that is responsible for their destruction. We know from years of experience that that is so.

Mr. Griffiths: Poison counts for a lot.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It may, but the bark kills many more. As a matter of fact the rabbits did not increase in numbers until comparatively recently, and this year I am afraid very little can be done because we have had rain over most of the agricultural areas and there is green feed everywhere. I believe, however, that we have missed our opportunity; the season has been wasted. Last year the same thing happened; rain fell very early and the Government did not undertake extensive poisoning until it was too late. We were told by the member for York that the Honorary Minister is doing all that can be done. I do not know what is being done but I do know that there are small colonies of rabbits inside the second fence and I have already spoken to the Premier and convinced him that something should be done straight away to destroy these colonies.

The PREMIER: The machinery has been set in motion.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am glad to hear that, but I am afraid we have left it rather late this year. Only the other day a settler was travelling from Mt. Marshall to Wyalcatchem and he found that there were seven live rabbits in the dog-box of the train. If there were seven on that occasion there must have been other occasions also when rabbits were carried on the train. Many colonies exist and if these were continually attended to the rabbits would be destroyed. Of course the natural enemy accounts for many. By means of poisoning I think it will be difficult to do very much. There are thousands of rabbits in those areas where a few years ago there were none at all or where it would have been difficult to get a shot at one. The question is a very serious one. Isolated farmers will have great difficulty in protecting their crops until they can get wire netting, but as we know, it is impossible to get wire netting just now. Then again we must remember that 80 per cent. of the total area of land within the second fence is in the hands of the State. Last year we distributed a great deal of poison free of cost to the farmer, and this year this has been done in large quantities. I understand the Government dams are all properly fenced. When dealing with the rabbit department, it must be remembered that the department can only work within the limit of the money provided, and that it takes a consider-

able amount of money to pay men to hunt up the small colonies of rabbits spread far and wide within the inner fences. I hope that the poisoning will be continued, for I doubt if trapping will account for many rabbits. I am certain that the farmer is willing to do his part. If rabbit boards can be successfully formed, they will achieve considerable good. I hope the Premier will agree to the appointment of the select committee, and I congratulate the hon. member on having brought up the question, which is of vital importance to the farmers. I have heard of rabbits being discovered in the electorate of the member for Swan (Mr. Nairn). In view of this that hon. member should join the member for York in his efforts to stamp out the pest. To handle the trouble we require co-operation between the rabbit department and the farmers. I notice that the Government seem inclined to repudiate their obligations in regard to the rabbits on Crown lands. The people of the Eastern States have learned how to minimise the loss from the pest, and we can profit by their experience. I hope the Government will become very active straight away and will utilise the few remaining weeks of summer in the destruction of the pest. As for the proposal to supply rabbits to the people of Perth, it will require very delicate handling, for poison is now freely laid in very many districts. For one, I should be very sorry to eat a rabbit brought into the City now. Only the other day I heard of a man who, having shot a rabbit, partook of it at dinner, and very shortly afterwards displayed all the symptoms of poisoning.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [10.58]: I intend to support the motion. In view of the complaints we have had from the agricultural areas, as to the depredations of the rabbits, hon. members will agree that something should be done, more particularly as we have in Western Australia something like 2,000 miles of rabbit-proof fence erected by the Government to protect the agricultural areas. In its way, there is nothing in the world to compare with this rabbit-proof fence. Yet, from all we can hear, the fence has absolutely failed to fulfil its purpose. I do not know what it cost.

Hon. P. Collier: It cost £328,000.

Mr. MULLANY: I know its cost was very high. We find on the Estimates that the upkeep of this alleged rabbit-proof fence in 1915-16 cost £9,000—that is distinct from interest charges—while in 1916-17 the cost amounted to £11,271. That is what the State has been paying for the maintenance of this fence. We find also on looking up the Estimates for 1917-18 that £11,271 has evidently been found insufficient, and that a sum of £12,200 is now provided, in order to keep up this rabbit-proof fence. In addition to the State being committed to the interest upon this sum of £300,000 odd, the cost of the fence, it is also committed this year to the expenditure of £12,200 for the upkeep of the fence. Is this fence carrying out the purpose for which it was erected?

Mr. Johnston: No. 2 fence is.

Mr. MULLANY: Members representing agricultural areas must admit that it is not doing so, and that between Nos. 1 and 2 fences the rabbits are as thick as they are in any other portion of Australia. Are we justified in putting this amount on the Estimates for the upkeep of the fence?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing items on the Estimates at this juncture.

Mr. MULLANY: I am not altogether doing that, but am dealing with the suppression of rabbits in the State. This motion distinctly asks the Government to do something. They are, however, endeavouring to do something, but I believe them to be working on absolutely wrong lines. When we find that we are committed to this expenditure on the Estimates for the upkeep of this alleged rabbit-proof fence, in order to keep rabbits away from the agricultural areas—and it appears from the evidence of both the mover and seconder of the motion, that rabbits are already in the agricultural areas—I want to know if we are justified in paying this amount. I will, therefore, support the appointment of the select committee to inquire into the rabbit question, believing as I do that this expenditure is being absolutely thrown away.

Mr. Johnston: Not so far as the No. 2 fence is concerned.

Mr. MULLANY: I am not concerned about either of the fences. The rabbits got through the No. 1 fence and will get through the No. 2 fence.

Mr. Johnston: That is why the No. 2 fence was built.

Mr. MULLANY: I believe that the appointment of this select committee is fully warranted in order to ascertain whether all this expenditure has been justified or not. I do not think it was justified. The rabbits are inside the No. 1 fence, which extends as far north of Port Hedland. There are, however, no rabbits in that district, and there never have been any. I believe that the wire netting which was utilised in the building of the fences, some few thousand miles of it, could be much better utilised if distributed amongst the farmers and settlers who are actually engaged in fighting the rabbits; and that this £12,200, which is going to be spent on the upkeep of the fences, would be very much better spent in that direction.

Mr. Griffiths: That would not be of much use.

Mr. MULLANY: I know it is not enough, but £12,200 would be of great use in fighting the rabbits on the spot. It has absolutely been wasted on the maintenance of these fences, which do not keep the rabbits out at all.

Mr. Griffiths: It has not been wasted.

Mr. MULLANY: In proportion to our agricultural areas, we have probably as many rabbits here as there are in South Australia, and that State might just as well claim that this fence is keeping the rabbits from going back there as we claim that it is keeping the

rabbits from coming here. I desire to support the motion.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 14th February, 1918.

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

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

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Curator of Intestate Estates.

2, Electoral Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

### MOTION — RABBIT PEST, SELECT COMMITTEE TO INQUIRE.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion by Mr. Smith, "That in view of the alarming position created by the rabbits, a select committee of this House be appointed to immediately inquire into the present system adopted by the department for combating the pest, with a view of recommending more effective methods of dealing with this national menace."

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.43]: I welcome this motion moved by the member for North Perth, and am very pleased to support his request for the appointment of a select committee of this House to deal with the rabbit question. I am sure all members recognise that the rabbit represents a big menace to Western Australia, and I agree with the words of the motion that the position at present is alarming. The time has arrived when we have to consider whether the lands of this country shall produce sheep and other stock and grow wheat, or produce rabbits. Hon. members well know the devastation which has been caused in the Eastern States by the rabbit pest, how large territories have been laid waste and the settlers upon them compelled to abandon their holdings. But I realise that, though this is an important subject, and one which should be grappled with, at the same time I would inform the House that the Government, through the Agricultural Department, have a policy with regard to it. That policy is to co-operate

with the farmers and settlers in every possible way for the destruction of the rabbits. It is not the province of the Government to destroy all the rabbits; it is the duty of the Government to co-operate in every way, and to assist farmers and others in dealing with the pest. It is no good for settlers and landowners and others to approach a Minister or a member of Parliament when rabbits have been seen on a particular property, and ask what the Government intend to do. I remember not long ago being approached on a railway station in this State by a farmer who said that a rabbit had been seen on his place, and he wanted to know what the Government intended to do. My reply to this man was, "What are you going to do?" He replied that he did not know, and I told him that the best thing he could do was to kill that rabbit. The idea seemed to have gained ground that directly a rabbit was seen on a property it was the duty of the owner of that property to immediately communicate with the Government and request that someone should be sent from Perth to kill the rabbit.

Mr. Johnston: The Government are the owners of land where the rabbits are.

The PREMIER: That is the spirit which has existed all along, and it is the wrong spirit. The Government are prepared to do everything they can to co-operate with the farmers in the eradication of the pest, and it would be idle for me to say, and it would not meet with the approval of the House, that the Government intended to attempt to destroy all the rabbits, while the people themselves stood by and looked on. The policy of the Agricultural Department is to co-operate with the farmers and others. We have a Rabbit Act and that Act must be enforced, and if it is not stringent enough it must be made more stringent. The people must be taught to recognise their responsibilities in this matter. The object of the measure is to bring about the eradication of the pest, and certain penalties are provided if people do not carry out the provisions of the Act. If the penal sections of the Act are enforced the people must not squeal. I well remember the trouble we had in this State in connection with the eradication of scab in sheep. Scab is one of the very worst diseases which ever existed in Australia, and Western Australia was longer in eradicating it than any of the other States. It was not until the Scab Act was rigidly enforced and the people were made to recognise their responsibilities, that the disease was stamped out. I may tell hon. members what scab in sheep really is, because many of them are too young to have seen anything of the trouble which existed in this country many years ago. Scab is considerably worse than either tick or lice in sheep, and once having got into the flocks it is most difficult to eradicate, more particularly if all concerned are not compelled to dip and carry out the provisions of the Act. As a result of most rigid inspection and enforcing the Act, we have had clean flocks in Western Australia for the past 20 years. In 1894, soon after I first entered this House, with that precociousness which is born of a new member, I moved for the ap-