

apart for the growth of the other timbers which our agricultural areas carry—jamwood, York gum, and others. Before many years, I am quite satisfied, those timbers will be extinct unless methods are adopted to preserve them. Possibly they will prove of great value as furniture woods. Indeed, I am of opinion that in the direction of furniture making may be found the most profitable utilisation of all our Western Australian timbers.

On motion by Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 28th November, 1918.

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

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

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. O'Loughlen, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Lutey (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) on the ground of urgent public business.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1918-19.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from 26th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Business undertakings.

Vote—Avondale and Harvey Estates, £3,810:

Mr. BROWN: I should like to know from the Premier what has been done in regard to the settlement of soldiers on Avondale Estate. Practically there are no soldiers as yet on the estate, and the time is getting on. There will shortly be a sale of ewes bred on the estate, and the soldier settlers should be in a position to purchase the stock they may require.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I should like to know from the Premier whether the Avondale estate has been thrown open to all returned soldiers, or whether it is reserved for soldiers coming from the Beverley district.

The PREMIER: To reply to the last question first: the Government were asked to allow soldiers who had enlisted from the Beverley district to be settled on the Avondale estate, if they so desired. I think, myself, it is very wise, because the people down there are prepared to take a personal interest in the local

men, and help them, not only with machinery but also with stock and in other ways. If there are not sufficient soldiers from the Beverley district to take up all the Avondale estate, the balance will be thrown open to other soldiers. It is the intention of the Government to place men on the Avondale estate as quickly as possible. I recognise that they should take up their blocks without delay in order that they may be in a position to secure their sheep and stock. Every endeavour is being used to have these lands settled as early as possible, and I will see that the matter is finalised without any unnecessary delay whatever.

Vote put and passed.

Railway Department (Hon. C. A. Hudson, Minister).

Vote—£1,503,344:

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [4.48]: The position of the Railway Department is given fully in the report of the Commissioner of Railways, which has been placed upon the Table, and of which copies have been furnished to members of the Committee. It will have been noted by hon. members that the earnings for the last financial year amounted to £1,816,388 and the working expenses to £1,455,334, showing a surplus of earnings over expenses of roughly £365,000. However, the interest which has to be debited turns that surplus into a loss of about £239,000. The financial results of the working of the railways are shown on page 1 of the Commissioner's report. The estimate of earnings for last year was £1,707,000; but the results turned out better than originally anticipated, although I did indicate, on the introduction of the Estimates late in the financial year, a possible increase, for the reason that the Railways had the opportunity of hauling the wheat into depots instead of, as in previous years, hauling it to sidings only. Further, the Railways received payment of a large sum of money owing to them by the Commonwealth. Again, the Trans-Australian Railway was opened, and our passenger traffic in consequence increased considerably. The results therefore are more satisfactory than originally anticipated. It is true that the expenditure exceeded the estimate, but that fact is due largely to the increased wages awarded by the Arbitration Court. Those increased wages were made retrospective by agreement, and last year's earnings had to bear about £25,000 in respect of increased wages relating to the previous year. I do not intend now to go into what is contained in the Commissioner's report, because hon. members have had an opportunity of considering that information for themselves. The estimate of earnings for the current year is £1,860,000. This allows for a considerable increase of revenue, which increase we think we are justified in anticipating. For the first four months of this financial year the earnings on the Railways have been £52,953 in excess of the earnings for the corresponding months of the previous year. The working expenses for the current financial year will amount to approximately

1½ millions, made up of salaries and wages and material and incidentals £1,486,000, compensation £7,000, Railway Institute £4,000, and a sum which did not appear last year, and which does not usually come into the Railway Estimates, of £2,300, being a contribution to the Death Benefit Fund. A number of railway men have been killed at the Front, and the demands on the Death Benefit Fund have in consequence been very heavy. Therefore it is thought wise that the Government should supplement the contributions of the railway men themselves to this extent. For the accident fund £4,500 is provided, and £1,000 for depreciation, and £50 for upkeep of Mundaring Weir. The increased expenditure amounts to, roughly, £50,000. The bulk of the increased expenditure is required by the Ways and Works branch, provision being made for re-sleepering, re-railing, and re-fishplating certain portions of the railway system. It is known, of course, that this has to be done at intervals. Last year not so much of it was done as should have been, because material such as fish plates was not available. But in the interests of safety, which is the first consideration in railway working, it is found necessary this year to re-sleeper and re-rail and re-ballast certain portions of the system. The amount I have referred to will be expended in that direction. Additional expenditure is also provided to meet increased wages which have been granted to the employees in the Locomotive Branch. The amount provided is £5,000. An agreement has been entered into by the Commissioner with the Locomotive Engine-drivers', Firemen's, and Cleaners' Union on a satisfactory basis, but it involves an annual increase of about £5,000. Allowance has also to be made in this department, as in others, for the increased cost of material. Whilst there were stocks in hand during the years of the war, the stocks have become depleted; and we have now to purchase at the high prices ruling. Other increases are comparatively slight, providing for automatic increases to cadets, although no provision has yet been made for increases which may possibly be granted by the Arbitration Court to the railway officers. However, the outlook now is such that, the Treasurer having gone through these Estimates with the Commissioner and myself, we are satisfied that we shall get the results anticipated. There is very little that needs to be added to what is contained in the Commissioner's report, and I now submit the Estimates to the Committee.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [4.56]: As the whole policy of the Railway Department will come up again in this Chamber, I suppose during next week, on the proposed amendment of the Railways Act, I do not propose to say much on these Estimates. There are, however, one or two matters to which I must call attention in connection with the working of the Railway Department. The first refers to men at present serving, or who have served, with the A.I.F., and the differential treatment meted out to a section of them by the Railway Department.

The subject has been brought before this Chamber repeatedly by way of question, and it has also been discussed in another place. However, it has not been possible so far to obtain what I, at least, consider the justice due to the men. The policy of the Railway Department has been to refuse to men enlisting in the Railway Corps the terms which they would receive if they did not enlist at all, but remained at home. There are certain privileges extended to railway employees enlisting in the other branches of the A.I.F. which are not extended to those enlisting in the Railway Corps, the department's excuse being that service in the Railway Corps is not so dangerous as in the A.I.F. generally. The special grievance is that any man enlisting from any branch of the public service is granted all the usual privileges if he joins the Railway Corps. On the other hand, a man may have left the Railway Department to enlist in the A.I.F., and gone abroad, and then transferred to the Railway Corps; such a man receives all the privileges attaching to service in the A.I.F. The Public Service Commissioner has sent out a notice stating that anyone enlisting for active service—and he specifically mentions the Railway Corps—will be granted leave of absence without pay on the same conditions as men enlisting from other branches of the Public Service. Thus the differential nature of the treatment is made evident. The treatment extended to men enlisting in the Railway Corps from the railway service of New South Wales is entirely of another character. Those men receive all the privileges which would accrue to them if they did not join the Railway Corps, and, in addition, the Government of New South Wales make up any difference between the pay of the men in the Railway Corps and that which they had been receiving from the State. Say a man from the New South Wales railway service enlists as a corporal—which the majority do—and receives 11s. per day from the Defence Department; then, if his pay from the New South Wales Government has been 14s. per day, the New South Wales Government make up to him the difference of 3s. per day. The only excuse for the attitude adopted by the Railway Department of Western Australia—so far as we can glean—is that a difference exists between the danger run by a man joining the Railway Corps and that incurred by one joining as an ordinary member of the A.I.F. I have received letters from railway men at the Front, and perhaps it would be just as well to quote from some of them in order to show that service in the Railway Corps, although it may not be in the highest degree dangerous, yet has resulted in men being seriously wounded and in some being killed. Moreover, many men in the Railway Corps have received military distinctions. Men do not get military distinctions for remaining behind the lines. We have even the member for Fremantle in the House of Representatives, Mr. Burchell, who went away as a member of the railway corps, shortly after his arrival in France being awarded the military cross. That shows that he must have occupied a dangerous position

and that he must have done something particularly meritorious. There is another man named Burley who served with distinction in the South African war as an infantry man and some time back went to France. He too served with the Railway Corps and for some meritorious action on his part he was awarded a bar to the D.S.C. medal which he received in South Africa. I have a letter from one of the men who served in the Railway Corps in France. It is rather long and I would not like to quote it in extenso, but in the letter several men who left this State with the Railway Corps are referred to. Most of them were wounded whilst on active service in France. He says—

I will relate a few experiences of what I have seen and heard while in Belgium with the Railway Corps. We were in our new camp in Belgium when we were shelled out and had to sleep away from the camp as the tents were no protection from the shrapnel of the big guns. We also had several gas alarms from the British front lines that the Germans were sending over gas clouds and we had to wear our gas masks till the all-clear signal was given. Our first casualties were when two sets of engine men and guards were sleeping in a dug out and Driver Packwood and Fireman Davey and Guard Harrison were severely wounded by shrapnel and sent to hospitals in England.

That does not look as if they were occupying positions that were without danger. The writer goes on to mention other casualties. It is hardly necessary, however, for me to read the whole of the letter. There are a dozen names mentioned, and it is easily seen that although the department may consider that members of the Railway Corps do not occupy quite such a dangerous position as the men in the infantry, the fact remains that they do occupy a position of considerable danger, and that many of the members of that corps have been severely wounded. If a man is prepared to give up his appointment in Western Australia and go wherever he is likely to be sent by the military authorities, the least the State can do is to see that he is permitted to retain what privileges he held before he went away. There should be absolutely no differentiation between members of the Railway Corps and the infantry men so far as the service in the State is concerned. I trust the Minister will look into this matter and reconsider his decision and at least treat the railway men with the same justice as is being accorded to other members of the public service. There is another matter to which I would like to refer, and it is the case of porter Oakes. This matter has been before the Minister for some time and it is considered that Oakes has been unjustly treated. Oakes has an unblemished record in the railway service extending over a period of 18 or 20 years. He was selected from among a number of others in the railway service to fill the position of searcher of railway carriages. Hon. members may perhaps be aware that frequently valuables are left in railway carriages, and the department generally like to have a man whose character and record are both good to fill the position of

searcher after the carriages have ceased running for the day. It goes without saying that the department must have considered Oakes absolutely trustworthy when they chose him for the position of searcher. Then a little split took place. The department themselves hardly know how to describe what really did take place. A charge was laid against Oakes and in conducting the appeal the representative of the department said it would be easy to prove that there had been forgery. His actual remarks were, "In view of these facts the department considered that a prima facie case of forgery had been made out and they dismissed Oakes." During the course of the appeal however, the department shifted their ground absolutely and they eventually said that Oakes altered the ticket, but that when he altered it he hardly knew what he was doing. That was the only explanation they gave. Perhaps it would be well to give the House some particulars in connection with that case. Oakes was a porter and he was acting as assistant conductor on the express on the 13th April last. A passenger joined the train at Meckering where he secured a return ticket to Northam. In writing out a ticket such as the one that the passenger procured the procedure is to make a duplicate of the ticket, and on the face of that particular ticket which was issued, certain words appeared, while on the duplicate there were different words. It is apparent that someone must have altered the ticket and the department set out to prove that it was Oakes who did that. After the inquiry had been going on for four or five days the conclusion was arrived at that Oakes did not alter the ticket and the only way in which the department could get out of it was by saying that he did alter it but that he did not know what he was doing at the time. This ticket was issued on the 13th April and 14 or 15 weeks afterwards Oakes was confronted with the ticket by a railway inspector and he was asked whether the writing on it was his. Oakes looked at it casually and said it was. It was a clever forgery and at a glance it certainly looked like his writing, but he did not have a good look at it and like most railway men he did not care about letting the officers of the department know that his sight was not as good as it might have been. Consequently he did not even go to the trouble of using his spectacles to examine the ticket. Oakes was not allowed to go away. As a matter of fact, he was subjected to what is known in America as the third degree, and he was not allowed to move until he gave his answers, one way or the other to the questions which were asked. He was also made to sign a statement and was told that he would not be allowed to go until he had signed it. He asked to be given time to think the matter over but he was compelled to remain there until he had signed.

Hon. T. Walker: And it was written out for him, too.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, by the inspector who examined him on that particular occasion. Oakes knew nothing at all about the whole business until he was confronted with the ticket and asked whether it was in his hand writing.

The Minister for Railways: He did admit at the commencement that it was.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He admitted it was, but apparently it was not his writing. The writing was like his.

Hon. T. Walker: After he had thought over the whole matter he knew that it was not his writing.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is so. And then he immediately did what any man would have done. He sat down and wrote a letter denying that the writing was his and he sent it in to the department. Although he was charged with having altered the ticket, during the appeal case no evidence was produced to show that he had made the alteration. He was exonerated and yet a stain was permitted to remain on his character by his being fined £1.

The Minister for Railways: They stated what they fined him for.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But if a man is exonerated, it is presumed that he is not guilty.

The Minister for Railways: He was exonerated on the charge of forgery.

Hon. T. Walker: The accusation of having altered the ticket still remains.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The fact remains that a stigma remains by his having been fined £1.

The Minister for Railways: He was guilty of an irregularity and was fined for that.

Hon. T. Walker: It is more than an irregularity to alter a ticket.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am convinced from my knowledge of Oakes, and from having looked through the whole of the evidence, that he was not guilty.

Hon. T. Walker: Not even of an irregularity.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No. The ticket was issued in the ordinary way; it was given to the person to whom it was issued and Oakes never saw it again until it was produced to him by the inspector without any notice of what he was going to do or say. Either Oakes was guilty and should have been sacked, or else he is innocent and the department should restore his character. He is at the present time suffering under a grave injustice; he is feeling his position keenly and because he has been fined £1, people will be bound to think he is dishonest.

The Minister for Railways: The board distinctly removed any suspicion of dishonesty.

Hon. T. Walker: They did not.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The fact remains that he was fined £1, and if a man is fined that means that he must be guilty of an offence. The Minister is sufficiently conversant with law to know that if a man is charged with one offence, that charge cannot be altered in court to another one and a penalty imposed. Having been charged with a particular offence, and having been found not guilty of that offence, it is up to the department now to remove the stigma which rests on Oakes's character. In any case, the whole system in connection with the issuing of these tickets should be altered. It is a very simple matter for anyone to erase the pencil marks from these tickets and write in something else. If the department adheres to

this system they will have considerable trouble with their employees, and at the same time they will be robbed of a lot of revenue by unscrupulous people who happen to get hold of these tickets. It has been proved that it is a simple matter for a man to get a ticket say from East Northam to Northam and alter it in any way he likes. It is not the same as signing a free pass, which certain men only have the right to do. Every man who acts as a guard is allowed to sign these tickets, and it is impossible to have a check so that any inspector will know that the signature is genuine. The system should be altered, because it leaves the employees open to suspicion if an alteration is made by an unscrupulous person. From what I can see, it appears that this kind of thing has been successively worked before.

The Minister for Railways: All the more reason why the department should be careful.

Hon. T. Walker: But they should not be unjust.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This comes in well after the McLeod case.

The Minister for Railways: McLeod was exonerated by the commission and Oakes was exonerated of the forgery charge.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not know how the Minister can say that a man is exonerated when there is still a fine against him. The file says—

In view of these facts the department considers that a prima facie case of forgery has been made out.

They then dismissed Oakes, and later on changed their minds and charged him with an irregularity.

The Minister for Railways: At the very opening of the file, it says that he is charged with an irregularity.

Hon. T. Walker: There has been no proof of irregularity.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It does not matter what Oakes is charged with; the general opinion is that he was charged with forging a ticket.

The Minister for Railways: The general opinion?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is the general opinion which counts. If the general opinion in the service is that a man is a rogue, surely that is something for him to concern himself about. While that charge remains against Oakes, his character is still black, and the other employees in the department must believe that he was guilty, and that he must have committed some offence, otherwise the fine would not have still stood against him. The letter from the Minister says—

I have given careful consideration to the representations made to me by Mr. Walker, M.L.A., and the other members of the deputation which waited upon me on the 11th ultimo on behalf of Charles Oakes, a porter employed in the Railway Department, and in reply I beg to inform you that I cannot interfere with the decision of the board.

The letter continues—

I am not prepared to discuss the details of the evidence given on the hearing of the

appeal, for the provisions of Section 75 of the Railways Act, which defines the powers of the board, also declares "that the decision of the board shall be final."

The Minister for Railways: Read the whole of the letter.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Another paragraph of the letter says—

According to the papers before me, and the statements made at the deputation, Oakes was charged with an irregularity in respect to the issue of a second class return ticket, Meckering to Northam, on the 18th April last and was dismissed.

What does an irregularity mean? It may be that the general suspicion was that he had forged this ticket for his own financial and personal benefit.

The Minister for Railways: He was exonerated in express terms of such a charge.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He was fined £1, and that means that he was guilty of something. The letter continues—

He then exercised his right of appeal under the Railways Act of 1904 to the board appointed for such purposes under the Act. The appeal was heard in due course, and the board clearing Oakes' character of any suggestion of dishonesty reinstated him in the service, but for the irregularity of which he was found guilty by the board he was fined £1. He was allowed all costs which the board considered were reasonably incurred by Oakes in order to clear his name.

The final words in the letter are—

Under the Act, then, the decision of the board must in all cases be respected by the parties to an appeal, and I do not intend to disturb it in this case.

If the Minister is convinced of the innocence of this man, who has been charged with a grave offence, and still leaves that stigma upon him, the position becomes absurd. The least the Minister can do in the circumstances, if he is convinced that the man is not guilty of the charge laid against him, is to have it withdrawn.

The Minister for Railways: I said I had not considered the full details of the evidence.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I will leave it at that. It seems strange that the department, after having a man in their employ for about 20 years, and picking him out for one of the most responsible positions so far as honesty is concerned, namely, that of a searcher in the carriages, should leave this stigma upon him. I have here a list of a page and a half of the things that Mr. Oakes has handed in to the department during the course of his career as a train searcher.

The Minister for Railways: Do you think the appeal board should be abolished?

Hon. T. Walker: What has that to do with the case?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not think so.

The Minister for Railways: And do you think the members of it should be dismissed?

Hon. T. Walker: Some of them are not fit for the post.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I say, so far as the appeal board and other courts are concerned, that the people who are prosecuting—in this case the Railway Department—are there to secure a conviction. I know from experience that the railway officers, once having a case given to them, get into trouble at the hands of the Commissioner if they do not obtain a victory.

The Minister for Railways: That is a very sweeping accusation to make, which cannot be proved or denied.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In any ordinary police court procedure, or the procedure of another court, once a man starts out on a case he must try to be successful in it. In this particular case the Railway Department do not like to be beaten on an appeal. The officers think they lose prestige if they are defeated on an appeal. They think there is something against them if they do not win upon it.

Mr. Green: They like to be on a win.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have heard a man say, "I am not going to take the responsibility of having lost this case. Someone else is to blame, and will have to take the blame when the Commissioner kicks up a row." The Commissioner tries to be just, no doubt, and thinks he is just, but he does not like to think that any appeal should go against him which will seem to indicate that he has acted in an unjust manner. In this case a decision was come to that the man should be dismissed, and that he was guilty of a serious offence, otherwise he would not have been dismissed. When the appeal comes along, there is not sufficient evidence to prove the offence, but on a technical victory he is fined £1, and there is still upon his character this stain. I hope the Minister will go into the matter and will do something to clear this man's character. With regard to the policy of the department in connection with railway facilities at outback centres, I would say that in my own district the department has said to anyone who made a request for stock yards, that if they would provide the labour the Railway Department would provide the material. If facilities are necessary at any particular siding, the Railway Department ought to be in a position financially to provide such facilities without calling upon any particular section of the community to take part in providing them. In actual practice the Railway Department send the material along and the tradesman is supposed to supervise the work, but in reality he does it. The whole cost is borne by the department except the labour of a couple of men. Men have been retrenched in the Railway Department because the department absolutely demands that anyone who wants any facilities provided must provide the labour, otherwise it will not be granted, and the result has been that men have been retrenched from that department, or transferred to another, because so much labour has been provided by private persons. People do not want to be done out of the facilities to which they are entitled. I should like to say a few words in regard to the policy of the Railway Department in connection

tion award. Originally it was the policy of the department to allow men in a certain grade to work up to another grade, by virtue of the time they have served in that particular grade. Like most employers, since the late war, the department has been regarded as having done something in the department which is distonourable.

Mr. Davies: I do not think there is either

Mr. WILCOCK: Under all arbitration awards there is a minimum rate, below which a man cannot be paid.

Flou. J. Waller: The minimum becomes the maximum.

MR. WILLOCK: No, because there are thousands in the service who are receiving considerably more than the minimum rate.

Mr. DAVIES: I admit that.

MR. WILLCOCK: Necessarily the rest of

[illegible]

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [5.25]: I am

[illegible]

Mr. Smith: Perhaps they were using Collie coal.

Mr. DAVIES: I do not know, but it is a well-known fact that it is possible to locate a railway engine at night time with greater ease than it is possible to locate artillery or an ambulance during the day. There is enough evidence to convince us that the men who belong to the Railway Corps run considerable risks.

Mr. Willcock: Some of the officers of the A.I.F. do not run any risk at all.

Mr. DAVIES: That is so, but taking everything into consideration, even though the railway section is only a small section in comparison with the A.I.F., that is no reason why the Government should discriminate between them and other members of the forces.

The Minister for Railways: The discrimination was made before they left the State.

Hon. T. Walker: It was wrong at any time.

Mr. DAVIES: However, it is only a small matter that I am asking the Government to do, and it is that, notwithstanding the definite replies which have been given to the series of questions asked in the House, the Government shall not endorse the policy of the Commissioner, and that they will even at this stage give the House a promise that they will reconsider the matter. Now that the armistice has been signed and there is a possibility of peace being proclaimed before Christmas, the men will be returning to the State. I have heard it said that some members of the Railway Corps joined merely to take jobs away from Frenchmen, and that their desire also was to get world-wide experience. Many of the members of the Railway Corps, however, were forced to join that corps because they were physically unfit to join any other section. The uncharitable remarks which have been made will be endorsed by the Government of the day if they continue the policy of discrimination. Those unkind remarks will certainly be thrown up to the men on their return, if the Government do not adopt a different attitude. Moreover, if the Government do not accede to the request which I have made, the action of the Commissioner will be conducive to bad feeling on the return of those men from France. There is nothing more to be said in regard to that particular matter other than that I would again stress the point that a small company like the Midland Railway Company can pay its employees whether they are in the Railway Corps or in any other section, and if that be the case the Government should surely be able to do likewise. There is another matter that I wish to touch upon, and it refers to the minimum rate of pay. So far as I understand it—and I have some knowledge of railway work—previously to the employees going to the Arbitration Court there was a minimum and a maximum rate. Speaking from memory, the minimum for guards, as mentioned by the member for Geraldton, was 10s. 6d. a day, and I think the maximum was 12s. 6d. In the past it has been the practice of the Railway Department that where there is a minimum and a maximum laid down, the department pay the minimum and the men seldom

reach the maximum, with the result that the men with a few years of experience of this matter go for what they call the mean, and get something between the 10s. 6d. and the 12s. 6d. The men went to the court—I do not know what they asked for, but it is a fact that the court granted an average wage which amounted to 2d. a day less than the average wage between 10s. 6d. and 12s. 6d.

The Minister for Railways: They made it the minimum.

Mr. DAVIES: They made it a flat rate. It was 11s. 1d. a day.

Mr. Willcock: The court did not say they were not going to allow the men to go above it.

Mr. DAVIES: I think the old Act laid it down that the wage struck by the Arbitration Court should be the wage of the least competent worker. The Act has been amended since then. The rate that the court struck is for what we might term an average worker. There are good and poor workers, and in the past the court—they had to, according to the Legislature—declared the wage for the least competent workers in the industry.

Mr. Willcock: They got automatic increases, and those were taken from them.

Mr. DAVIES: The amending Act prescribed the rate for what might be termed the average man.

Mr. Munsie: And it was the best course to adopt, in my opinion.

Mr. DAVIES: I am not disputing that. The court departed from the minimum and the maximum and brought it up to something between the two. It is very hard to decide between men; I am prepared to admit that. But when a man is working alongside another who is getting perhaps 1s. more, that is not conducive to the smooth working of the industry those men are engaged in. Of course we must admit there are men who are better than others. An employer should have the right to say how much above the flat rate he should pay. I wish, however, to deal more with the minimum rate paid in the railways to-day. The court has decided that the minimum wage for railway workers shall be 9s. 7d. a day, and in face of that fact a previous Government granted a war bonus bringing the wage up to 10s. I understand that is to remain in force until six months after peace is declared. I hope that that increase will be kept in operation until the men have an opportunity of again going before the court. I should like, if it is at all possible, that the discrimination shown between married and the single men should be removed, and that the wages of 10s. per day should be the minimum wage of Government railway employees. I will give reasons which appeal to me why that should be the case. I certainly agree that a man who has a family has been very hard hit, much harder hit, in fact, than a single man perhaps without responsibilities. But there is a time coming after the war when there are employers who will take advantage of that discrimination, and if this system is allowed to continue—

Mr. O'Loughlen: It will have a boomerang effect.

Mr. DAVIES: There is no doubt it will induce some employers to say, "All right, we will give the married men more than the single men." And perhaps the majority of employees being married men will accept those conditions. The time then will arrive when the employers, to save that extra pay, will take advantage of that clause to say that for the future they are going to employ single men. As the member for Forrest interjected, this will have a boomerang effect. I am going to ask the Government that they should not be the first to lead the way in this discrimination against employees. There is another matter I want to refer to, although it is rather a small matter to bring up in the House, yet I think it is worthy of attention. It deals with the question of the lavatory accommodation at the Perth station. I had occasion during the visit of the French Mission to notice a number of travellers going to the lavatories to have a brush-up and perhaps clean their boots, and when I went in there I was amazed, if not staggered, to notice how poor the accommodation was for an important central station. The conditions obtaining to-day at the Perth station are not those that should exist there, and I hope the Minister will send a note along to the Commissioner drawing his attention to the poor conveniences that are provided for travellers who desire to make their toilet at the station. There are other matters that one could deal with, but it is not my desire to delay the legitimate business of the Assembly.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.45]: I would like to receive from the Minister in charge of this vote an idea of what the policy is to be in the immediate future in connection with the railways of the State. I should like to read a few extracts from the Commissioner's report in order to show the stand I am taking. The Commissioner says—

The loss in working has been brought about by circumstances arising out of the war, combined with the increasing amount which has had to be provided each year to meet interest charges, without a commensurate increase in business to provide the additional earnings necessary to meet such liability.

Then he goes on to say—

During the year 4,094,510 train miles were run, which is a decrease of 405,701 miles compared with the previous year. In view of the necessity for economy, the train mileage was kept down to the lowest reasonable minimum, consistent with the decline in traffic.

And further—

Compared with the previous year, the earnings have increased to the extent of 6.35d. per train mile, and the working expenses by 7.82d. As the gross revenue was £60,994 less than last year, it will be apparent that the improved rate of earnings is due to the reduction in train mileage. The increased working expenses are likewise due to the reduction in train mileage.

It will be noted that the chief causes of the decrease in revenue of the railways is alleged to be consequent upon the war conditions, and

it is pointed out that, owing to the decreased mileage run, there has been a falling away in the earnings and an increase in the expenditure. Recently I put in an application by way of deputation to the Minister for Railways, asking him to give me an increased train service over the Boyanup-Busselton section. I have not yet received from the Minister anything but a verbal reply, which was to the effect that on a reduced mileage the railway under question had provided increased earnings; and it was held as an argument that therefore the reduced service should be maintained. When we see that, according to the Commissioner of Railways, on a reduced service there is a loss of earnings and an increase in expenditure, it seems rather Gibernian. I think any ordinary Minister or Commissioner would say that increased earnings should be accepted as an argument for improving the service. However, the Minister for Railways has said that it is an argument for maintaining the service unimproved. I daresay the same argument could be made to apply to many other lines. Again, we find this in the Commissioner's report—

Taking the year 1914-15, the earnings from the carriage of local timbers were £333,384, and represented 23.26 per cent. of the total goods traffic. For the year just closed, the earnings were £109,679, or a decline of £223,705; whilst the tonnage hauled represented only 11.42 per cent. of the total goods traffic. Therefore, the effect of the dislocation of the timber trade, through inability to export, has been most marked on the operations of the railways.

I maintain that a great portion of the timber traffic went over the line in respect of which I have asked for an improved service. Yet in spite of the falling away of the goods traffic this line showed increased returns. Since the war is over, I am sure that altered conditions will shortly obtain and that the increased cost in the requirements of the railways will be a declining factor. This prospect should be an argument with the Minister when considering his decision. It is a vital matter, not only to my district but to many other districts, and I think the Minister should make a definite statement as to his intention. The line to which I have referred has its terminus close to a State butter factory. The railway service during this season is quite inadequate, and if the Government desires the factory to progress and the quality of the butter to be maintained, an immediate improvement is essential. Most certainly a better service should be provided on that small section of railway, especially as I understand it only means an additional cost of an extra gang of three or four men. It is but a very small item, and on the indication furnished to me that the line is showing an increased return, I think my request was fully justified. I trust the Minister will review his decision in this respect. Then there is the question of the grading of railway stations. I hope that the Minister will be able to inform me that, so soon as normal conditions return, the re-grading of the station at Busselton will be attended to. Another question in



regard to the same line is that of Capel station, which to-day is practically an unattended siding. Capel sends away a great deal of fruit, potatoes and other commodities, and the only attendant is a woman, who is the caretaker and who receives the handsome remuneration of 10s. per week for doing a station-master's work. I brought this under the notice of the Minister for Railways with a view to securing for that woman some more reasonable remuneration, but I was not able to achieve my object. It must be apparent to most hon. members that the tramway service is in great need of special attention. Some of the cars ought to be scrapped. They are not safe for people to travel in. A little more attention might be paid to the upkeep and the cleanliness of the cars, which are disgraceful to ride in.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.35]: We notice with regret that the railway revenue has not yet begun to mend. I am doubtful whether the Government are going the right way about increasing the revenue. The Government are shifting a lot of wheat from Geraldton to the metropolitan area to be gristed, and instead of carrying it on their own railway they are paying to have it carried on the Midland railway. I do not know whether or not it is because they have too much revenue. I admit that the distance by the State railway is a little more than that by the private railway, but if the Government could carry the wheat at only a slight margin over actual working expenses, I think they should use their own railway, and not hand over to a private company the haulage of large quantities of wheat and afterwards come to the House and say that the railways will not pay, because the traffic is not there. I was very much surprised to find that the Railway Department cannot carry this wheat from Geraldton to Perth as cheaply as it can be carried by the Midland Company.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It is a longer distance.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I admit that, but if the Government railways got only the smallest margin over and above the actual cost of haulage it would be profitable. I do not know what the rate is.

Mr. Maley: It is 11s. per ton.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I was old 12s. 6d. I think that if the Railway Department made anything over working expenses on the carriage of this wheat, it would pay them to carry it, and the balance could go as a contribution to the interest and sinking fund on the construction of the line.

Mr. Smith: The Midland Railway Company are carrying wool from the Murchison and beating the Government line.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But in the case of the wheat the Government are themselves providing the money with which to pay for the carriage. The statement that it is the Pool's money is all "bunkum." It is the State's money, and the Pool will never meet its own expenses. I notice that in the railway report—particular attention has been drawn to this part in the Press recently—it is stated, under the heading of "Unremunerated services"—

Special services were rendered on behalf of the Government to the value of £8,965, or £7,465 in excess of the £1,500 Treasury Vote which is granted this department to cover the cost of such services.

I am of opinion that if the Commissioner were charged for all services rendered to him by other departments, he would be in a worse position than he is at present. In the course of his own report we find 10 pages dealing with various blocks of land which have been resumed for him by the Works Department during the past year. The Commissioner pays nothing for that work. Services are rendered him by the Crown Law Department, by the Health Department, and by other departments, amounting in the aggregate to many thousand pounds worth of work, for which the Commissioner does not pay anything. Yet he reports to Parliament and to the Press all that he himself does for nothing. It might be better if we paid him for his services and charged him for services rendered to him. I notice that at the beginning of the year the railway men were sent to the Arbitration Court for the purpose of getting an award in regard to their wages. No matter what the member for Guildford says, the court fixes the minimum wage which has to be paid to any man.

Mr. Davies: That is not what I said.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member said that the court fixed the minimum wage for the average worker.

Mr. Davies: That is the Act.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is not the Act. The court has only to take into consideration in fixing the wages what is necessary for the average worker to live upon, in comfort, not the wages of the average worker.

Mr. Davies: I accept your correction.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Act says that no minimum rate of wage or other remuneration shall be prescribed which is not sufficient to enable the average worker, to whom it applies, to live in reasonable comfort. The minimum wage which is fixed by the Arbitration Court is for the least competent worker.

Mr. Davies: It used to be.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is so at present and not fixed for the average worker. I think the Government, when the arbitration award is fixed, should take into consideration the positions of the men employed, in the same way that a private employer would do. In the case of carpenters, private employers are in many cases paying 1s. a day more than the arbitration rate in order to get better men, but when we come to the Government, no matter how good a man is or what responsibility he carries, he is only paid the minimum rate set down in the award. Some of our fitters, who have been in control of long lengths of line and have seen to their safe keeping, had been getting 1s. a day over the wages of the ordinary fitter prior to the arbitration award. Immediately that award was delivered, the 1s. a day was removed. If it was right and just that this 1s. should have been paid prior to the award, it is also right and justifiable that it should be paid

after the award. If men were asked to carry out a superior class of work entitling them to an increase before the award was delivered, there should be no alteration after the award is made, and the same terms and conditions should apply. According to the Estimates we have before us this year, every department has had provision made for automatic increases. I regret that there is no such thing as an automatic increase in the Railway Department. In the last agreement, to which the Minister has referred as having been fixed up satisfactorily and which he said will mean further increases so far as the expenditure is concerned, provision is made for automatic increases. These increases did apply some years ago in the Railway Department, and first class men in the service used to receive automatic increments. This absence of increases will tend to cause dissatisfaction in the department, and if the men are dissatisfied we shall not get good work from them.

Mr. Smith: That is the state of affairs now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If preferential treatment is shown between Government departments, dissatisfaction is bound to be brought about.

Mr. Smith: It is rampant now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In answer to the hon. member, I would say that the action which has been taken since the arbitration award was delivered, has not led to that satisfaction which one has a right to expect in a Government department.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Some of them have had substantial increases.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some did and some did not get them.

Hon. J. Mitchell: There were no decreases.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, but those who were getting increased wages prior to the award are now kept at the minimum rate, and the men have become dissatisfied. I recommend the Minister to go into the matter and see that everything which causes dissatisfaction in our railway service is removed. We are going through very serious times, and we know that the air is electrical. Not only here, but in other parts of the world, this is the case, though perhaps not so much here as elsewhere. We do not know what will happen next. We must, above all, endeavour so far as possible throughout Australia to carry out our work in such a peaceful manner that we will get over many of the difficulties we have had to go through during the last four years, and set an example to other parts of the world. We have to be careful, and we must do nothing or say nothing at present which will have any tendency to cause discontent. In passing, I would like to say that it would be a good thing if the Government would place some form of censorship upon one or two of our newspapers, the "Daily News" for instance. The Estimates before us are in lump sums as usual, and we are not in possession in detail of the various services which have been rendered. I am glad that the Minister will assist the fund which has been sub-

scribed to by the railway men in connection with casualties in the service. There is no doubt that good work has been done by this fund. The present Minister for Works is responsible for that position so far as the money is concerned. I am pleased that the Minister for Railways is going to subsidise this fund this year, because we know well that many of the persons, who have a claim on the fund have been unable to obtain the money on account of the lack of finances.

The Minister for Railways: Some have had to wait.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There has been so much to distribute, on account of the number of men who have been killed, that it has been impossible to distribute all the funds that were intended for distribution. It is a good move on the part of the Minister to help those men who, hitherto, have helped themselves. Those who help themselves are deserving of assistance, and these men have undoubtedly done so.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [6.7]: There has been already excellent material advanced showing the carelessness and indifference with which the large body of employees that are needful for the running of our railways has been treated. So far as Government supervision is concerned, or Ministerial responsibility, it seems to be entirely absent. The Minister, as we should judge, is no more than a figurehead or a rubber stamp. I do not know whether it is because the Railways Act gives such powers to the Commissioner and makes him almost infallible and irreproachable so far as criticism is concerned from outsiders, or whether it is because of the general apathy in respect to duty on the part of those who occupy these positions. I have never known in my experience here—and it has not been a little one—such Ministerial slowness. This carelessness is most culpable, so far as the administration of the Railway Department is concerned. Letters have been sent requiring answers and deputations which could have been answered in the course of a week have waited months for a reply. I do not know what idea the Minister for Railways can have as to his position.

The Minister for Works: Had it to do with the management or the policy, or both?

Hon. T. WALKER: It seems to me it has to do with both. I want to know, particularly in regard to policy, what single step has been taken by the Minister as a Minister, to review the inequalities in regard to our soldiers abroad when they have enlisted from the ranks of the Railway Service. That is a matter of policy and one which concerns the whole welfare of the State. It is a matter upon which our honour is concerned in this war. What single thing has been done by the Minister to review that abnormal position? The war has been fought by men in every grade and by men in every section. Every man who has been serviceable, even in a transport, is as much deserving of credit and honour as the men who, by being in another unit, have been put into the trenches. They have all helped to save Australia, and

have all been absolutely necessary, and the position they have taken up has been the result more or less of accident. The men qualified as railway men have been needed. The men at the Front could never have been effectually served, so as to keep up their courage, bravery, and success, had it not been for the way in which they have been served by the railways, which were rapidly laid and successfully used by those who have left the Railway Service here and elsewhere for that purpose. I cannot conceive that apathy towards the public service which has been exhibited by the Minister for Railways in allowing a discrimination of that kind to pass. Because a man does not get into the danger that others are in he shall be disgraced, according to the Minister.

Mr. Davies: And he may be, too.

Hon. T. WALKER: As shown by the member for Geraldton, these men have been in danger all the time they have been there. Their risks are enormous. He has not only the letters, but the evidence in the historical records of men who have been awarded for bravery in facing danger and the risk of death. Nothing has been done by the Minister to review these cases.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. T. WALKER: Before tea I was saying that in the matter of policy the Minister for Railways has been most indifferent to the welfare of those who have left the Railway Department in order to serve their country at the Front. In this instance he cannot shield himself behind the Railways Act as in another instance he has done, because this case concerns one of those functions which belong purely to the province of administration. The State cannot afford to make distinctions between various sections of its own employees. The railway men are just as much in the public service, although governed by a special Act, as is any other class of Government employees. What is done in all other State departments in the interests of the country, for the furtherance of that enthusiasm and that loyalty and that patriotism which have been characteristic of Western Australia during the war, should be done in the Railway Department also. If ever there was designed a method of making men discontented, and even disloyal, of making them feel that they have no interest to serve in the welfare of their own land, it is the method which has been adopted in regard to the men who have left our railway service in order to go to the Front. In fact, all the way through, if the design had been to make the men discontented, to make them feel that they were being treated as slaves, and not as free citizens, that design could not have been better served than by the Minister's policy in this connection. And the excuses which have been made in order to justify this policy! The Minister, who is placed there by the people to see that wrongs of this kind are not committed, urges that these men who leave the railway service in order to do railway work at the Front are in no imminent danger of death. In fact, he says

that they run practically no risks. But they leave the railway service in order to protect this country in any way they can once they get to the Front. We could have never won the war, the men could never have been kept at the Front, the fighting could not possibly have continued, had it not been for the faithful service of the railway men.

The Minister for Railways: Hear, hear!

Hon. T. WALKER: And they are to be punished, they are to be marked as not running the risks of their comrades. It has been shown that they have run, and do run, serious risks; that members of the Railway Corps have received the rewards of the brave and the heroic. And when the question is asked here, whether the policy adopted by the Commissioner in this case is endorsed by the Government, we receive from the Minister for Railways the answer, "Yea, it is." I want to know to-night if that policy is to be continued.

Hon. P. Collier: And the Committee want to know.

Hon. T. WALKER: I want to know to-night if there is to be any retracing of the steps of the Government.

The Minister for Railways: Everybody wants to know.

Hon. T. WALKER: The country wants to know, and the railway men want to know.

The Minister for Railways: Hear, hear!

Hon. T. WALKER: The Minister may try to throw the subject aside by a supercilious jest. His supercilious conduct all the way through in the administration of the Railway Department is precisely what I am complaining about. He has not taken his office seriously; he has not given his brains and attention in the measure that the importance of his post demands. That is what I complain of. The Minister has allowed things to drift. He has been a mere echo; not a Minister. He is not treating either the country or the railway employees as is required.

The Minister for Railways: I am prepared to leave the railway men to judge. I am not asking for your judgment.

Hon. T. WALKER: The railway men may judge in a way which the country will not like. I do not say that it will affect the Minister for Railways much, but certainly it will affect the country. These constant pinpricks, these constant wrongs, this unvarying indifference to promises and to right, will lead the men ultimately into a state of revolt, for which no one will be able to blame them.

The Minister for Railways: Now we are getting to it.

Hon. T. WALKER: We are on thin ice. I know something of the spirit of these men.

The Minister for Works: The member for Kanowna has made some statement.

Hon. T. WALKER: I regret to have to make such statements.

Mr. Foley: The hon. member, when in office, resented such statements when they came from the other side.

Hon. P. Collier: When?

The Minister for Railways: I am not resenting those statements.

Hon. P. Collier: The member for Leonora is talking nonsense. The member for Kanowna never resented such statements.

Mr. Foley: Yes, he did.

Hon. P. Collier: When and where?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know to what the member for Leonora alludes; but can he deny that the position is as I have stated it? Can the hon. member deny that the railway men are justified in complaining of the distinction made? Can he deny that they are right?

Mr. Foley: No; but I have heard you complain—

Hon. T. WALKER: The member for Leonora has never heard of either myself or of any other member sitting on this side of the Chamber committing such acts of injustice as these.

Mr. Foley: I have heard the hon. member complain—

Hon. T. WALKER: That sort of assertion is all right for street corners, but it is not proper of the hon. member to lower the dignity of this Assembly by such unfounded reproaches. I say there has never been in the case of any previous Government's career such callousness and indifference as have been displayed in regard to these vital matters by the present Minister for Railways whilst he has been in office. And not only in this regard does the Minister adopt the Commissioner's policy without in any sense of the word criticising it, reviewing it, or inspecting it. He adopts the Commissioner's policy simply because the policy is suggested to him. He adopts it without regard for the rest of the community at all, without regard to the fitness of things, without regard to the critical position in which the whole Empire is placed through the adoption of a policy of that kind. It is a policy that tends to weaken the nervous strength of the community, and not to foster a loyal enthusiasm. In the same way there has been, first and last, all through the life of this Ministry, a policy of discouragement. The question has been asked of the Minister by the railway employees, "When are you going to honour the promises which have been made of a classification?" There has not been a step taken towards classification. The railway men have come to the Minister to ask for what is granted in other branches of the public service, and he has turned them callously aside. Deputations have been played with, have sometimes been refused a hearing. That is the treatment accorded to men who have had to fight the battle of life, which is brought upon them by the critical conditions of the era in which we live, with prices going up, and the difficulties of keeping a family enormously increased. All through that period the railway men have knocked at the Minister's door and asked, "When are we to get justice?" and there has been no response, no answer to the question. Do hon. members wonder that I should have to make the statement that the men cannot always tolerate such indifference, that a time will come when they will have to assert their own dignity as men, for the protection of their families? Can one

wonder that there is discontent abroad in circumstances of this kind? But if we want to see the conduct of the Minister in its true light, let us come down to an individual case—the case alluded to by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock). It is my privilege to know something of that case. The matter was placed before the Minister for Railways not only by myself, but by other members of an influential deputation, representing practically the whole of the railway service; and from the date of that deputation up till yesterday no reply has been received from the Minister.

Hon. P. Collier: How long is it since the deputation?

Hon. T. WALKER: Over two months.

The Minister for Railways: What?

Hon. T. WALKER: What was the date of the deputation?

The Minister for Railways: It is shown in my letter.

Hon. T. WALKER: The letter says—

I have given careful consideration to the request made to me by Mr. Walker, M.L.A., and the other members of the deputation which waited on me on the 11th ultimo.

The Minister for Railways: That is the date.

Hon. T. WALKER: And all this time one was waiting for an answer. It is close on two months. On the 11th ultimo a deputation waited on the Minister, and until yesterday no answer was received. How can the Minister claim to be attentive to his duties when for all that time a man is left under the stigma of being a guilty person, and is still under that stigma by this very letter? I want the House to understand the nature of this case, because it is in small matters that we gauge the character of individuals. Oakes is a railway porter and a ticket collector on the trains. Between Meckering and Northam he issued a railway ticket in such a manner as tickets are issued on those trains. There is an original ticket which is preserved and a duplicate underneath in green, and as the names are written on the white surface the ticket underneath is impressed, and becomes a facsimile. That ticket was issued, the fare was 4s. 2d., and afterwards the ticket was picked up, and instead of being Meckering to Northam, as originally issued and as showing on the white ticket, "Northam" had been partially rubbed out and the word "Perth" had been written over it. Oakes's name had been written on a different portion of the ticket from that on which it appeared on the white ticket. Weeks passed without Oakes knowing anything at all about it. Without a moment's warning he was called into the office at the Perth station and shown the green ticket, and asked whether it was his handwriting. The imitation of Oakes's handwriting was very good, though not perfect, and Oakes, who saw it without his spectacles, said frankly, "Yes, that is my writing," just as any hon. member, if he were confronted with a forged cheque—an admirable imitation of his writing—would say, "Yes, that is my writing." Oakes was asked to explain it, and he said "I cannot." I want hon. members to know

that at that very interview with the inspector, Oakes said he had never done anything wrong, and that if there was anything wrong with the ticket he was not responsible. He felt worried about this writing, which he said afterwards that while it resembled his he had not written it. He asked permission to get his spectacles to examine it more closely, but he was not allowed to leave the room. A statement was drawn up and he was asked to sign it. He did not compose the statement; it was composed for him by the officer.

The Minister for Works: Why did he sign it if it was not right?

Hon. T. WALKER: He signed it because he could give no other explanation.

Mr. Smith: He thought it was his writing.

Hon. T. WALKER: He was confronted with what he could not help but say was his writing, as it was like his writing. It was not difficult of imitation, and it was afterwards proved that it could be imitated by the simplest amateur. In order to understand how Oakes's signature was obtained to the document, it is necessary to understand the character of the man. Oakes is an exceedingly simple-minded man, not quick of mind, but perfectly honest and straightforward. For his own safety from ruin he would not screen himself by telling what appeared to be a falsehood. To him, the simple-minded man, it was his writing. His analytical ability was such that he could not conceive an explanation as to how it got there.

Mr. Smith: Where was the ticket found?

Hon. T. WALKER: It came through some channel into the audit office. But I think I could explain it. That ticket was forged in Northam, in my opinion, and on that ticket, the forger travelled to Perth.

The Minister for Works: How could he get it to forge?

Hon. T. WALKER: The train on which the ticket was issued arrived in Northam in the early morning, and there are no ticket collectors at the barriers. The ticket got abroad, and afterwards it turned up in the audit office. The only thing there is that would lead to the supposition that Oakes wrote the green ticket, which did not correspond with the white ticket, was that the white ticket was for the journey from Meekering to Northam, the fare being 4s. 2d., 3s. 8d. fare with 6d. extra for getting the ticket on the train. It is in the green ticket that the alteration has taken place. First of all the 4s. 2d. was left visibly there. Part of "Northam" was left there. When I saw the ticket first I could read "Northam" under "Perth." Part of the original signature of Oakes was there, and it had been copied a little to the right of it and afterwards rubbed out. Now, no railway forger, no man of experience, would have obliterated the ticket in that way, leaving it possible to detect the original exactitude of the ticket with the white one. It was done by an amateur, by somebody who did not know that that ticket would get back again into the audit department, and there possibly be detected. If it

had been done by a railway expert hiding up his tracks, the 4s. 2d. would have not been left on it. There is the means of detection straight away. It was done by somebody who had been influenced by the McLeod case, and was trying experiments on his own. He travelled to Perth on the ticket, and it was only when it got into the audit office that the alterations were noticed.

Mr. Smith: Was it the original ticket that was issued, or the facsimile?

Hon. T. WALKER: It was the carbon copy. The original ticket is perfect; it is there in Oakes's writing, and it is on the green carbon ticket that the duplicate tracing of the original ticket exists.

The Minister for Works: They never altered the fare.

Hon. T. WALKER: No, that is what a railway man would have done; he would have put the fare to Perth on it. The forgery was the work of a man who had a bit of leisure in Northam and who was coming on to Perth. He tried the experiment and got through. I believe I could place my hand on the very man who did it. I almost had evidence of it in my office.

Mr. Smith: Do you know whether the carbon system is still used by the department?

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly.

Mr. Smith: After the McLeod case?

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes, it is still used, and there is the enormity of it. No man in the railway service is safe while that system exists. No man can be saved from being charged with forgery, and as sure as he is charged and goes before the board as at present constituted he will be convicted; and as sure as we have such a Minister for Railways as we have now, the conviction will stand.

The Minister for Works: I do not think you are fair to the appeal board.

Hon. T. WALKER: Absolutely fair. I have heard all the evidence and there is not one word of proof that can convict Oakes of an irregularity.

The Minister for Works: What did they specify the irregularity to be?

Hon. T. WALKER: The alteration of a ticket.

Mr. Smith: But if guilty of that, he is guilty of forgery.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. But the charge against him was that he had manipulated that ticket.

The Minister for Works: What motive could he have had?

Hon. T. WALKER: None. That is the absurdity of it. Now, am I unjust to the board? There could be no motive in it. I want the Minister to know that not only at the preliminary examination did he protest that he had done nothing wrong, not only afterwards did he write a report, and say he had not done wrong, but on oath he declared that he had never altered that ticket and that he had never seen it after it passed to the purchaser until he was shown it by the inspector. And, what is more, the man who purchased it said that Oakes wrote it and tore it out of his book and handed it to the purchaser, who put it in his

pocket and kept it there until he returned later to Northam after he had been to Perth.

The Minister for Works: Does that man want one to believe that he paid only 4s. 2d. for a return ticket from Meckering to Perth?

Hon. T. WALKER: He pretends that he got another ticket at Northam. That is where the suspicion is. To my mind, it is even more than suspicion. He cleared Oakes. There is no evidence to show that Oakes altered that ticket. The whole of the evidence was dead against his having done so, and he denied upon oath that he was guilty of even an irregularity. Of course, if he was guilty at all, he was guilty of perjury, seeing that he swore that he was not guilty. To tell me that a man guilty of such an irregularity and of the perjury is fit to be reinstated, is absurd. Yet, they reinstated him in his office and so said he was fit to continue that kind of work, while still fining him £1. For what? Let me protest against the way in which it is endeavoured to make light of it. Quoting the board, and the Minister endorses it, they say now that there was only an irregularity committed, and that he was perfectly honest, that no suspicion was cast upon his honour or his honesty.

Mr. Smith: There cannot be any half-way house.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is the whole point.

The Minister for Railways: The "Sunday Times" said there was no half-way house.

Hon. T. WALKER: Nor is there. Either the man is guilty or he is not guilty, and if he is not guilty you cannot fine him £1. I have watched the progress of that trial. This is what took place: As the evidence proceeded it was perfectly clear that Oakes could not be brought in guilty of dishonesty. The man who bought the ticket paid 4s. 2d. for it, and Oakes accounted for the 4s. 2d. in his book. But it would never do for the department to have taken up the attitude that the man was guilty of forgery and to dismiss him for it—for that is what the department did; when he entered the box to give his evidence he was out of employment, the dishonour of dismissal was upon him—and then say, "We had no reason for it." I do not say that they worked consciously, that there was a conspiracy in that way, but it became evident to me that that was the suggestion, that the poor man had unconsciously, not knowing what he was doing, written "Perth" instead of "Northam." That was their supposition to get out of it.

The Minister for Railways: Whose supposition, to get out of what?

Hon. T. WALKER: The supposition of the majority of the board. Originally it was the supposition of one man, but eventually there was a majority of two. The absurdity of that view is shown in the fact that on the green ticket there is "Meckering to Northam." A man would have to rub that out before he could write "Perth" over it. It was rubbed out. There was evidence of that. But the rubbing was not sufficient, for the old word "Northam" was still present under the new word.

\* Mr. Smith: Did the man who bought the ticket say what he did with it?

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes, he put it in his pocket and kept it there until he delivered it up to another ticket collector on his return journey from Perth. There could be no unconsciousness about rubbing out one's own name, rubbing out "Northam" and writing "Oakes" over again and writing "Perth" where "Northam" was. But in order to get out of the thing and not let down the department for having acted precipitately, and for having, as one man put it, exercised the third degree, imprisoning the man until he signed a document—

The Minister for Works: They do not do that sort of thing.

Hon. T. WALKER: They did. They put him in the room and told him he must not leave.

The Minister for Works: They are men, like him.

Hon. T. WALKER: But there are all kinds of men in the world.

The Minister for Works: I should be sorry to think that either officers or men in the Railway Department would do such a thing.

Hon. T. WALKER: So am I. They exercised control over him, kept him there and would not let him out. When he did get out, and, having secured his spectacles, came back and asked to see the ticket again, they told him it was too late, that it had gone upstairs, that it had been landed where the thunder-bolt would come from immediately.

The Minister for Works: Who told him he could not see the ticket for the second time?

Hon. T. WALKER: It is in the evidence submitted to the Minister for Railways. The Minister has read it.

The Minister for Works: Whoever told him that was too officious.

Hon. T. WALKER: Exactly what I am saying.

The Minister for Works: He had the right to see it.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. There was too much officiousness all the way.

The Minister for Railways: You say he was refused the right to see the ticket.

Hon. T. WALKER: He was told that it had gone upstairs and could not be seen. Inspector Storeman was the man who told him so. It is in the evidence. The Minister for Railways has the evidence.

The Minister for Railways: I have not. I sent it back.

Hon. T. WALKER: Well, I am speaking absolutely the facts. The Minister has read the evidence.

The Minister for Railways: I have not. I told you in a letter that I did not intend to read it.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member ought to have read it.

The Minister for Railways: I ought to do a lot which I do not do.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is perfectly true; that is what I complain of, what everybody complains of. He is not doing it. These are the facts of the case. I want to point out the utter impossibility of that man having unconsciously written his own name and "Perth"

instead of "Northam," and yet it was upon that supposition—

The Minister for Railways: Do you think Mr. Davies is fit for the position of chairman?

Hon. T. WALKER: I certainly was surprised at Mr. Davies.

The Minister for Railways: Do you think that Mr. Hope was biased?

Hon. T. WALKER: Mr. Davies is a man I respect and he does his duty.

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not wish to say anything against Mr. Davies generally, but there are times when a man can psychologise, and when a man can too hastily pre-judge or judge a case according to the evidence of opinions offered by his colleagues. This was a case in which I believe Mr. Hope actually psychologised Mr. Davies.

The Minister for Railways: Mesmerised him, hypnotised him.

Hon. T. WALKER: He could never have judged according to the evidence. I asked the Minister when I waited upon him to read the evidence.

The Minister for Railways: I did not do so.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is a confession. A man asks for justice and the Minister will not even look at the evidence. What kind of Ministers have we? They will not read the evidence, but form a conclusion and take a stand without knowing facts. This is the kind of Minister who is at the head of the Railway Department! What confidence can the railway employees have in him when he takes a stand of that character? The evidence discloses the impossibility of Oakes having been guilty, and of the verdict being anything else but a comic opera verdict. It is not based upon facts or justice.

The Minister for Railways: Whose verdict is it? Mr. Davies's?

Hon. T. WALKER: The verdict of the board, apparently endorsed by the Minister.

The Minister for Railways: We have no right either to endorse it or dispute it.

Hon. T. WALKER: I thought the Minister would say that. There is of course some logic in the stand he takes. The man has had a trial, and the law provides that his trial, whatever it may be, fair or unfair, is final and that there is no appeal from it. Logically the Minister is correct and we cannot gainsay it. What is unfair, however, should be avoided by a Minister. If we get from a court a ridiculous verdict, a verdict which says that a man is guilty but is perfectly honest, guilty of an irregularity which implies a forgery, the alteration of a ticket, guilty but unconsciously guilty, and that the act was done in a dream or something of the kind, that he is perfectly honest and did no wrong consciously, but that the court fines him £1 and makes him pay certain expenses, and that this will stand against him on the books of the court for ever, and that under this disgrace the man must go down to his grave, to say that a Minister is helpless in the face of a verdict of that kind, and can do nothing but declare his impotency, what kind of a position are we in? What is the Government for but to try

to get justice in all things? Is it not the highest aim of Government to do justice and right? Will the Minister tell me that he has no powers, no inclinations, no rights to endeavour to rectify a wrong? If he cannot get a re-trial and cannot upset by another appeal the verdict of this board, he can at least do justice to the man by remitting the fine.

The Minister for Railways: And pay his counsel's costs?

Hon. T. WALKER: My costs for what I did are paid. That is why I know all about the case. I have watched it from beginning to end, and I know every fact of which I speak. Does that help the Minister at all, that mean contemptible attitude?

The Minister for Railways: Who was it hypnotised Mr. Davies, Mr. Hope or yourself?

Hon. T. WALKER: I had no opportunity. Who is everlastingly hypnotising the Minister? He is never out of a mesmeric trance. He is always under that cloud of aberrated intellect, and is unfit for the work he is there to do. This does not justify him in making statements in this vulgar way. Can he not do something to get justice for a man he knows to have been wronged? The facts have been put to him in such a way that he cannot argue to the contrary. He says he cannot, or will not do anything. He is impotent, and the country is governed by men who are absolutely helpless in the presence of a wrong which needs redressing. I hope the Committee will not tolerate this kind of treatment. I should perhaps go into the position of the board, and say that this kind of board will never do justice. There are always two to one on the board against the men, but I do not say this happens in any other way than unconsciously. At any rate, it is not a fair tribunal to the man who is accused. How little chance a man has we know from the McLeod case, in which, when the thing was fully investigated, the verdict of that tribunal was reversed. We know the board can do wrong, and yet the Minister says now, "I cannot help it."

Mr. Smith: Half a dozen Ministers have said the same before the McLeod case came on.

Hon. T. WALKER: Is it not time we altered that?

The Minister for Railways: Abolish the board.

Hon. T. WALKER: The men could not be worse off if we did so. Whose duty is it to alter the law? If the board is wrong, who is in power to put that wrong right? There is no power to alter the law or move one step to do justice, and the Minister allows this old man, who has been for 20 years in the public service without a stain upon his character, a respected and trusted man, against whom even this charge, by imputation, of dishonesty cannot be proved, go down to his grave with this stigma upon his name. The man feels it, and rightly so. The older a man is the more he feels an injustice of this sort. For an old man like this to be callously left under that

imputation, that having acted with a kind of irregularity which meant the alteration of a railway ticket no matter from what motive, is unwarrantable. His services are dispensed with, and he is only taken back after being fined, and the Minister can go to bed and sleep on it and say, "It does not concern me." He has no interest at all in a fellow mortal. I cannot understand this callousness. Human nature must be very different in some people to what it is in others, when some can smile at this sort of thing and ignore it, and allow seven weeks to elapse before answering a letter, and when the matter is discussed in the House treat it in a flippant manner as though it did not matter. This man's honour is more to him than the pound, or than any sum in money. Notwithstanding this old man's feelings the Minister will do nothing. The Government, however, might do something. They might look at the evidence, if the Minister will not do so, and will not see what the facts are and make himself acquainted with the case before he replies by a letter. Let Cabinet take the matter into consideration. The evidence clearly demonstrates the absolute innocence of Mr. Onkes. Being innocent he should not remain under this stigma, and should not be wounded in spirit. He should not be left to carry that load all through his life, lessening his vitality, depressing his spirit, and, who knows, hastening his end. I ask the Government to see if something cannot be done to do justice in this case. I do not expect much from the Minister, for all the way through he has shown an indifference for his public duties, more particularly in cases of this kind; but I do expect that more experienced men, who know their fellows, and who all through life have aimed at doing justice and seeing that none are wronged without some reasonable grounds, will do something. I ask the Government to read the evidence and come to their conclusions on the evidence alone, and then do to this man what should have been done before, make some restoration for the wrong committed.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [8.27]: The position in which the finances of our railways are at present placed is not at all due to the way in which the railways are now controlled. I have previously expressed this opinion. I recognise that if the wages of the employees were reduced to 5s. a day, if such were contemplated, and if fares and freights were put up inordinately, there would be no possible chance of the railways paying with our present population. The position has been put forward from year to year by the Commissioner for Railways more clearly than I can ever hope to do. He has pointed out that the number of people per mile in this State is somewhere about a third of what it is on the average, or more nearly a fourth, in the Eastern States. Consequently, until we get an increased population alongside our railways in this State we cannot possibly expect them to pay. The railways can only be made to pay by the unimproved lands lying alongside our railroads being taxed. I am sorry I cannot vary the tone of

the debate. I regret, with others, that for several months attention has been forced upon members of this Chamber that there is a large number of employees in the Railway Service who are not getting a fair deal, or justice. It is unnecessary for me to stress the attitude taken up by this so-called National Government with regard to the enlisted railway men, who are having their privileges denied them, because they have gone out to do their bit in the best way at the Front. I cannot understand the Minister and his colleagues, or see how they can justify their attitude and be consistent in their treatment of the railway men at the Front. Individual instances have been quoted this evening, but whether the Minister takes any notice of them or not I have no means of knowing. At all events these instances go to show that justice has not been secured to the individuals concerned. I recognise and frankly agree that under our railway legislation the Commissioner has almost exclusive power. But in some instances, if the Minister were to stand back and examine the merits of a case for himself, justice would be done. Let me adduce the case of a man in my own electorate, a man named J. Crockett, who was a goods shed porter at Kalgoorlie. He is an elderly man, and has served in the railways for several years. Elderly though he be, he offered himself for service at the Front. He went to the Front and returned. Owing to the attitude of the Kalgoorlie goods agent, this employee, rightly or wrongly, believed there were certain reports being made to the railway heads which would be detrimental to his continuing to hold a position in the railway service. At one period, owing to great provocation—I will not go into the details of the case, but I could satisfy the Minister on the point; I was so satisfied of the justice of the case that for the first time I approached the Commissioner of Railways on such a matter—acting, I say, under great provocation, this man, having been taunted by the goods agent, struck him. I am disposed to believe the evidence of several of Crockett's co-workers, who say that the goods agent, knowing the nature of the unfortunate man, provoked him so that he would commit a breach of the peace. However, it must be owned that he struck the goods agent. I am not going to defend that. His case was heard, and he was summarily dismissed—an old man, having done his bit for this country, thrown out of the railway service and practically starving in Kalgoorlie! I ask that that case be reviewed. If it is impossible for the man to work under the Kalgoorlie goods agent, who is said to be a very difficult man to work under, the Department should, in view of the special circumstances of Crockett's case, give him a chance of re-employment in another district. A request to that effect has been made, but has not been granted. Let me point out, too, how matters are allowed to drift in the service. There is the case of Shunter A. L. Jeffreys, of Albany. Probably the Minister is aware of the facts. On the 21st March of this year the



man was employed in Albany. He had given the signal to the driver, he says, in connection with some shunting. The driver, of course, maintains that he did not see the signal. I am not, however, going to embroil the driver in the dispute. The fact remains that a slight collision occurred, a brake van and some coaches being damaged. The fair procedure in the circumstances, if it was considered that the shunter had been guilty of negligence, would have been to fine him. Had he been fined, and had he then considered that he was unjustly fined, he could have exercised the right of appeal. However, he was not fined. The railway heads, sheltering themselves under Section 52 of the Railways Act, instead of fining the man, simply required £1 to be given up of his pay. After he had signed the pay sheet there was no possible chance for the man to appeal.

The Minister for Railways: Perhaps he is just as well without an appeal, to judge by what we have heard to-night about the appeal board.

Mr. GREEN: I contend that as long as the appeal board stands there, the man should have the opportunity of being heard by the board.

The Minister for Railways: And the decision of the board ought to be respected.

Mr. GREEN: Undoubtedly. However, if even a judge of our Supreme Court renders what in the opinion of this country is an unjust decision, we are democratic enough to criticise the judge. Much more are we entitled to criticise the members of a railway appeal board. Members of a railway appeal board are not infallible, and it is the right of every free citizen to voice his protest against what he considers injustice. The exercise of that particular right in a democratic community tends to make boards and courts the more careful to dispense justice. However, let us see what was done, and what was not done, in this particular case. This shunter was never asked for his defence. When he applied for access to the file on the subject, he was refused it; and he never knew what charges actually had been made against him until he received a reply to some correspondence he addressed to the Chief Traffic Manager. The attitude the man maintains is that the signal had not been seen by the driver. As, however, he contends it was, then it was the duty of the guard to stop. That is a matter which should have been thrashed out by the Railway Department. I now turn to another case, a case of more pressing interest, because it brings in its train considerable discontent in the largest union in this State—I refer to the West Australian Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees. Probably the Minister is au fait with the trouble right at the present time. What is the position? Let me review the facts; and I do not say this in any threatening manner, but I conscientiously believe that if the case is not handled fairly by the Minister it will bring upon us as grave an industrial trouble as has ever been experienced in Western Australia. Let us

see from what a small beginning the trouble springs. It originates in the withholding of justice. I can see one Minister tiptoeing signals to the Minister for Railways. It is very gratifying to see that kind of communication between two members of the Government, but this is a serious matter, and should be treated as such, at all events until the Minister has heard my statement of the case. In May of 1912 a man named W. S. Eddins was employed as a casual goods porter in No. 3 goods shed, Perth. In May of 1913, just about 12 months afterwards, he and a co-worker were loading a piano for transport to Subiaco. The piano slipped and this man Eddins, in order to try and prevent the piano from falling upon the floor, forced his knee under the piano, with the result that the weight of the piano came off the truck on to his knee, crushing it, and permanently lamming him in the right leg. The injury was so serious that for eight months the man was prevented from following his avocation. During that time he received half pay from the department. When his knee was well enough to allow him to resume duty, he was given employment as a barrier porter at one of the Perth wickets, and was paid at his old rate of 9s. per day. This was before the 1s. rise was given to the married men by Mr. Frank Wilson. After Eddins had fulfilled the duties of a barrier porter for three months, the Secretary for Railways wrote to the union requiring that this man should accept the under-rate workers' pay according to the schedule, as being an "under-paid" worker. That letter was written on the 21st April, 1914. The union naturally took the stand that as the man had done faithful service in the department, he should retain his old rate of pay, at least until it was proved that he could not do the work required. Considerable correspondence passed between the union and the Secretary for Railways, but the Secretary for Railways adopted such an unbending attitude that on the 12th June, 1914, the union agreed that the man should be paid 8s. per day in another portion of the railway service. The case was, however, fought out by the union. It was brought before Mr. Davies, P.M.; but Mr. Davies pointed out that he had no jurisdiction in the matter, because the union had made an agreement with the Commissioner of Railways for the payment of this man at a lower rate. The present position is that the man is employed in the capacity of lavatory attendant, receiving 8s. per day. When the rise of 1s. was granted to married men, Eddins, although a married man with a family of two—one a daughter aged 11 years, the only son having been lost in France—was left on the 8s. per day mark. When the rise to 10s. per day came to the married men, the department refused to extend the increase to the small number of "underpaid" workers. The union naturally take the position that this man should receive at least 10s. per day. For this contention their authority is nothing less than the industrial agreement, under which the work Eddins does is classed at 9s. 7d. per day. Under the rise granted to married men,

his rate should be 10s. per day. Questioned before Mr. Davies, the man maintained that he was doing the work of a lavatory attendant efficiently, and that consequently he was not an inefficient worker, and should not be classed as an "underpaid" worker.

The Minister for Railways: Did the man go to the court for the purpose of ascertaining his position?

Mr. GREEN: Yes; but the court ruled that they had no jurisdiction in the matter. The magistrate said the man was not inefficient, but efficient. That being so the bounden moral duty of the department is to pay him the full rate.

The Minister for Railways: The magistrate found in the man's favour, then?

Mr. GREEN: Yes; but the man is not getting the money. There is another Kalgoorlie case, that of a worker whom I have known for a considerable period, H. S. Woolnorton. One can go at any time to the Lane-street crossing near the Kalgoorlie railway station, and see the man performing the duties of crossing keeper. For that duty he as a married man should receive 10s. per day, plus the goldfields allowance. He is actually receiving 8s. per day. Why? Because he is a one-armed man. Why is he a one-armed man? Because he lost one arm at the Front fighting his country's battles. And such a man is receiving 8s. per day from the railway service of this country! I say that in such circumstances it is no matter for surprise that we infuse a little heat into the controversy. The railway employees are so warm over the matter that they have followed the constitutional course of advertising a special meeting of the union to be held on Thursday, the 5th December, when the following motion will be submitted:—

(1) That the Commissioner of Railways be cited before the arbitration court for a breach of the award No. 9 of 1917, by employing H. S. Woolnorton at Kalgoorlie doing the work of crossing keeper at a rate of wages less than that specified in Clause 19 of the said award during the pay period ending November 16th, 1918. (2) For employing William S. Eddins at Fremantle doing the work of a lavatory attendant at a rate of wages less than that specified in Clause 18 of the said award during the pay period ending 16th November, 1918. (3) That Charles Haynes, the General Secretary of the W.A. Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees Union of Workers represent the union before the Court of Arbitration in the above matters as agent.

Representations have been made about this, but in vain, and I would be lacking in my duty if I did not try to impress upon the Minister, with all due humility and with the most serious words that I can possibly command, that the position is critical indeed. On top of all this there is another bolt from the blue. Only to-day at twelve o'clock the secretary of this Railway Association, who advertised this special meeting, received a notice which reads—

Arbitration Act No. 57 of 1912. Application to cancel registration under Section

27 of the Act to the President of the Court of Arbitration.

and then followed the usual formula. This is signed by Mr. Alcock, agent for the Commissioner of Railways, whose address for service is Royal Insurance Chambers, Perth. This was served on Charles Haynes, the general secretary. I am sorry that some more able man than myself has not endeavoured to impress upon the House the gravity of trying to precipitate industrial trouble.

The Minister for Railways: What union is that? Is it the general union?

Mr. GREEN: Yes. It is an application for the cancellation of their registration. Why? Because they are trying to get a fair deal for their members under the award which has been given them.

The Minister for Railways: What reasons have been given them in the notice?

Mr. GREEN: No reasons at all. I will hand it over to the Minister. But the reasons perhaps are that the union has been registered erroneously, that due consideration has not been given to the proviso of paragraph (b) of Section 101 of the Act. It is discovered nine years afterwards that the rules of the union do not conform with the requirements of the Industrial Arbitration Act, and that for reasons shown in the attached declaration the registration of the union ought to be cancelled, unless such requisition for the amendment of the rules as the court may decide is complied with. Those may be valid reasons for men who are asking for tricky legal formalities, but so far as the common sense of the people of this State is concerned, and so far as the general sense of the community is concerned, I am satisfied that we can appeal to both sides to see that this application is not proceeded with. I appeal to the Minister now to exercise all the power at his command to see that the registration for cancellation is stayed until the union has a fair chance to see whether the members are getting a fair deal. Any alternative proposal to letting this insidious idea take its course will have results which we, on this side, and I am sure hon. members opposite also, will not stand for. I trust that the Minister will do good and useful work by seeing that the union does not have its existence threatened because the members of it are appealing for their principles and endeavouring to get justice.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn—in reply) [8.53]: I have listened with attention to the remarks which have been made by the member for Kalgoorlie and I may say that none of the matters that he has referred to has come under my notice. I can only state, therefore, that inquiries will be made into the hon. member's allegations, and I can give an assurance that there will be no delay, even in spite of the remarks by the member for Kanowna that great delays take place in connection with whatever is done by the Minister for Railways. The member for Sussex complained about the train service to Busselton. I can assure him that the reasons given for the curtailed service fully justified that

course being taken. I may add at this stage that the Minister is to a certain extent circumscribed by the Railways Act. The Minister for Railways is not the administrator of the railways, as is well known. The administration is taken out of his hands by the appointment of a Commissioner under the Act, the object being to remove the railways from political control, and whilst the Minister is merely the medium between the Commissioner and Parliament he has very little power under the Act. There is one matter which has been stressed with some degree of reason, and it is the attitude that has been taken up by the Commissioner and, as has been stated, adopted by the Government, and that is the differential treatment towards railway employees in regard to annual leave. At the time the Railway Corps was formed it was thought that the members of it would not be placed in the same dangerous position as the members of the Australian Imperial Forces, and an arrangement was made between the Commissioner and those who enlisted in the Railway Corps that they were not to be entitled to allow their annual leave to accrue during the time they were away. The arrangement was apparently satisfactory to both sides, and the agreement was entered into. The member for Guildford intimated that some of the men went away without a knowledge of that agreement. If that be the case it should be the subject of an inquiry, and I shall make it a subject of inquiry. It was reported to me that the men knew, and in fact some of the railway men themselves told me that they knew and that they were satisfied with the conditions.

Hon. P. Collier: Even if they did know, is it fair treatment?

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** The member for Geraldton put quite a different phase on the position. I propose to immediately follow it up, and if the facts are as stated there is no alternative but to at once pay the men the money they are entitled to in lieu of accrued leave.

Mr. O'Loughlin: It was a wonder the Commissioner did not apprise you when the questions were asked.

Hon. P. Collier: Apart from whatever understanding there may have been, it was a matter of policy.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** The Commissioner's attitude—

Hon. P. Collier: But this is not a Commissioner question.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** The Commissioner's attitude at the time the corps went away was generally supported. The position was that there was a difference between the Railway Corps and the others. With regard to the other matter which has been made so much of by the member for Kanowna, and in connection with which he found it necessary to attempt to show a want of interest on my part in the railway men, I was of course quite a diligent and capable Minister when the deputation waited on me. They were then quite satisfied to leave Oakes' case to my judgment. If I had given a decision reversing that

of the appeal board and remitting the fine of £1 and paying something like £40 costs, I would have been the best fellow in the world. But I took the attitude that Oakes was an employee of the Railways. I might read the letter which sets out the facts. I wrote—

I have given careful consideration to the representations made to me by Mr. Walker, M.L.A., and the other members of the deputation which waited on me on the 11th ult. on behalf of Charles Oakes, a porter employed in the Railway Department, and in reply I beg to inform you that I cannot interfere with the decision of the board. According to the papers before me and the statements made at the deputation, Oakes was charged with an irregularity in respect to the issue of a second class return ticket Meckering to Northam, on the 18th April last, and was dismissed.

He was not charged with forgery or dishonesty; the charge was one of irregularity: The letter goes on—

He then exercised his right of appeal under the Railways Act, 1904, to the board appointed for such purpose under the Act. The appeal was heard in due course and the board clearing Oakes' character of any suggestion of dishonesty reinstated him in the service, but for the irregularity of which he was found guilty by the board he was fined £1. He was allowed all costs which the board considered were reasonably incurred by him in order to clear his name.

On the question of costs, let me point out that in giving the decision of the board, the chairman definitely stated that all suspicion of dishonesty or misconduct was removed from Oakes' name. He was exonerated completely even of suspicion of improper conduct, such as the member for Kanowna said was alleged against him. But he was found guilty of some irregularity in his conduct, and he was fined the small sum of £1. He was reinstated, and he was allowed about £5 for the costs which he necessarily incurred in defending himself on the charge of having to clear his name of suspicion of forgery. That money was paid to him.

Mr. Smith: That was a peculiar attitude to take up; you first fine the man £1 for an irregularity, and then you allow him expenses.

**THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** There were two charges against him, and he was exonerated on the charge of dishonesty and he was allowed his costs in connection with the case of irregularity. I would like hon. members to understand the position in regard to the board which dealt with the matter. The Act provides that any person permanently employed in the Government Railways may appeal to the appeal board, which consists of the Police Magistrate, one person appointed by the Commissioner, and one by the union to which the employee belongs. The evidence occupied some days, and eventually the decision was given. As the member for Kanowna has been so emphatic about having been present and knowing the facts as well, I should like to point out that Section 74 of the Act provides that no solicitor, counsel

or agent other than an employee of the department or the recognised secretary of the union to which the appellant belongs, shall appear or be heard on any appeal. An application was made to the board for the payment of some £20 as costs of solicitor attending, and of about £15 for the shorthand notes taken of the appeal. That application the board refused. They had no authority for ordering the payment of such sums. The powers of the board are defined in Section 75 of the Act, which also definitely lays it down that the decision of the board shall be final. In my letter I stated that I was not prepared to discuss the details of the evidence given on the hearing of the appeal, for Section 75 of the Act provided that the decision of the board shall be final. I went on to say that, therefore, the decision of the board must in all cases be respected by the parties to an appeal, and that I did not intend to disturb it in this case. An employee, having been dismissed, elects to take his case to the appeal board, whose decision is final. Suppose there was provided the right of appeal to the Minister from the finding of that board. Would it not be equally right for the Commissioner himself to appeal to the Minister if he disagreed with the decision of the board? I say it would not be right for the Minister to entertain such a proposition. The law is there, and the Government will support the law.

Mr. Smith: Apparently some different law is required. We had better have a Royal Commission to inquire into it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You can move for it to-morrow.

Mr. Smith: Something ought to be done if the Government are so pig-headed as to refuse to give justice to a man.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not within the power of a Minister to interfere with the decision of the board. What is the use of the law if the Government are to override it? It is the law, and it ought to be respected. For my part, I do not intend to interfere with the decision.

Mr. GREEN: There is one point which I overlooked when on my feet. Let me say by way of explanation that something further is being done in regard to the lavatory attendant, Eddins. This is precipitating the crisis to which I have referred. Here is a letter, under date 25th November, 1918, from the station-master at Fremantle to the lavatory attendant, Eddins, as follows:—

Re Arbitration awards, the Chief Traffic Manager instructs that you are not to start work again until you have given me an undertaking in writing that you are prepared to work as lavatory attendant at 8s. per day. (Sgd.) C. S. Evans.

The Minister will see the seriousness of the position in which this man has been placed by the Commissioner.

Mr. SMITH: Will the Minister tell us what the Government intend doing in regard to the management of the Railways after the expiration of the six months for which the present Commissioner has been retained? The

Commissioner's term expired last June. The Government, caught unprepared, could think only of renewing the appointment for a further six months.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid the hon. member is not in order in attempting on items to discuss the policy of the Government.

Mr. SMITH: I am not discussing specially the Commissioner. I merely want to know what the Government are going to do about the management of the Railways after December. We have not yet discussed the new Bill, and even supposing that it will pass, some considerable time will be required in which to consider the appointments of the proposed new Commissioners. I want to know whether, at the end of December, the Government intend to re-appoint Mr. Short for another six months. The Railway Department has been losing a considerable sum of money during the past year.

The Minister for Railways: What has this to do with the Estimates?

Mr. SMITH: A great deal. Are the Government satisfied to go on losing this money year after year without telling the Committee what they are going to do about it?

The CHAIRMAN: I really must rule the hon. member out of order. If I were to allow him to discuss this, I could not prevent any other member from discussing it, and we should be here all night.

Mr. GREEN: I should like something definite from the Minister about the cancellation of the registration of that union.

The CHAIRMAN: I gave the hon. member an opportunity of finishing his remarks on the general discussion.

Mr. O'Loughlen: But the Minister has not replied definitely on the point raised.

The Minister for Railways: I can only say that it is the first I have heard of it. I will inquire into it.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Tramways, £110,870:

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [9.10]: I am surprised that the Minister should not have seen fit to explain to the Committee why the profits from the tramways have been allowed to fall away to such an extent. The profit this year has dribbled down to £5,292.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And there is neither depreciation nor sinking fund allowed for.

Mr. SMITH: I see from the report of the Commissioner that during the past three years the average profit has amounted to £15,392, or a total profit of £46,175 for the three years. Yet for the past year it has been only £5,292. The Minister does not see fit to explain this to the Committee. There must be something seriously wrong with the management, because on referring to the cash takings I see that they have risen from £73,000 odd in 1915 to £91,000 in 1918. On the ticket sales there was an increase of £10,000 over the same period, equalling altogether an increase of something like £30,000 as between 1915 and 1918. Yet the profits have decreased as I have shown, and that, too, without any provision for depreciation or sinking fund.

The Minister for Railways: Do you say that no provision is made in the Estimates for maintenance?

Mr. SMITH: I say that nothing has been written off for depreciation or sinking fund.

The Minister for Railways: Do you think there has been depreciation?

Mr. SMITH: The road is so badly looked after that the depreciation is quite abnormal. When the Government took over the tramways the Commissioner of Railways was appointed general manager of the trams at an increase of £500 per annum. I desire to know whether Mr. Short is going to retain the management after the 31st December. There are only a few weeks to go before Mr. Short's term expires, and as a capable general manager of tramways is not to be picked up every day I should like to know what the Government intends to do in regard to the future management of this important department. I think I am justified in asking this question, because the accounts disclose a very serious state of affairs. I wish to enter a strong protest at the way in which the tramways are being run. Those who are compelled to use them know well that the trams are ridiculously overcrowded, and are not carrying out their proper functions.

Hon. P. Collier: That does not express the case at all.

Mr. SMITH: Words fail me in expressing the contempt I have for the present management of our tramways.

Mr. Foley: You have said that for many years.

Mr. SMITH: And I shall continue to say it. Any citizen is entitled to enter a protest against this sort of thing. In my electorate we have no railways, we do not ask for bridges, and we have no particular interest in wheat, but we have an interest in the trams.

The Minister for Railways: This is the only parish pump you have.

Mr. SMITH: I think I have good grounds for complaining at the way in which the tramway service is conducted.

Hon. P. Collier: I marvel how city members put up with it.

Mr. SMITH: We have to grin and bear it. I am afraid so long as the present Government are—

Hon. P. Collier: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Of their present mind, we shall have very little redress. We cannot get away from the fact that, following the example of previous Governments, they have been full of promise but slow to perform. I am here to voice the opinions of a large number of the patrons of the trams, and have no hesitation in saying that their grievances are well founded. The Tramway Department is losing a considerable amount of business. If it showed any enterprise at all it would largely increase its rolling stock in order to cope with the traffic.

The Minister for Railways: That is the point, if we can get the rolling stock.

Mr. SMITH: What effort has been made to get it? What carriages are the Government building, and have they any on order?

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: They have been telling us that for years.

Mr. SMITH: I am afraid when I come to ask about them I shall be told that they have gone to the bottom of the sea, like the last lot. The Government have been slow in providing rolling stock to cater for the business that is waiting for them.

Hon. P. Collier: It is all camouflage.

Mr. SMITH: They have done very little in the way of tramway extensions to the outside suburbs, which are crying out for travelling facilities to the city.

The Premier: There is one on the Wanneroo road.

Mr. SMITH: In my opinion the Wanneroo district has been neglected. If it was exploited by a proper tramway system I feel sure the district would go ahead rapidly, and would be the means of bringing in a lot of traffic to the railway service. I do not think the Government are likely to take much notice of what is said on these Estimates, for half the year has already gone by, but I do ask the Minister controlling this department to look into the tramway service, and see if he cannot improve matters.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [9.20]: I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the member for North Perth. I was wondering whether this was the end of the penny sections, because he has to-night dropped this question. I am, however, going to take it up for him. I wish to refer to the fares charged to soldiers, who have to go up for business reasons to Francis Street to collect money, give information to the Military Department, and for other purposes. Many of these returned soldiers are not in a fit condition to walk.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Will they not give them a pass?

Mr. FOLEY: Not all of them.

The Minister for Railways: They can be had on reference to the Military Department.

Mr. FOLEY: Some of these men do not get a pass. A soldier with one leg should be given one, and others as well. In the City there are what is known as city tickets, which carry passengers from Pier-street to King-street, and other parts of the City. It would be a good thing if these privileges were extended to disabled soldiers in such a way that they could, if they wished, ride for a penny from Francis street, instead of Roc-street, to the present City boundaries. A man going from King Street could then journey as far as Francis Street for one penny. It would be a good act on the part of the Minister if he would allow those men to start their penny sections at Francis Street. These disabled men are not getting more than they deserve, and I am sure that the Minister will, if he considers the matter, regard it in a favourable light.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.25]: I agree with the remarks of the member for North Perth that the report of the Railway Department does not give hon. members the true position, so far as the tramways are concerned. It appears that this year the tramways will be run at a loss unless there is a considerable increase in the traffic. It is all very well to show the net

profit when no depreciation or sinking fund is allowed for. The sinking fund, based on the conditions that Fremantle is compelled to provide for under the Municipal Act, would run into over £11,000 in connection with the Perth tramways. If the local authorities were running these trams, and had to provide sinking fund to repay the capital expenditure, they would have to hand over to the Colonial Treasurer over £11,000 every year. All that is shown here is £5,293, as net profit, which indicates that there is still a sum of £6,000 to be accounted for.

The Minister for Railways: They are doing new work out of revenue.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is done with every tramway service.

The Minister for Railways: There was a sum of £14,000 for renewals.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We have a sum set down of £20,000 for belated repairs. This sum has appeared ever since the Government have had the tramways. When will these belated repairs stop?

The Minister for Railways: Not until we have relaid the lines.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is it not time the Government realised that there are other repairs being done out of this amount, that is repairs which were found necessary during the time the Government have had the tramways? When we realise that the Perth people are paying 25 per cent. more for travelling than are the Fremantle people, we can only come to the conclusion that the Perth tramways should show a greater profit on the number of passengers they carry. There is something wrong with the management.

Mr. Davies: One is a municipal concern and the other is a Government concern.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: One is managed by a board elected by the ratepayers, and the other is run by the Government. I am surprised to hear the member for Leonora state that soldiers have to pay to go to Francis Street.

The Minister for Railways: A large number of passes are given.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In Fremantle over 7,000 passes have been given to invalid soldiers entitling them to travel free for 12 months.

The Minister for Railways: You give every returned man a free pass for 12 months?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That has been done up to date, but I cannot say what will be done in the future. These passes have been given to the Base Hospital to be handed over on submission of the names by the military authority. These entitle the men to travel to the hospital, or the barracks, at any time they desire, or upon any other portion of the tramway service.

The Minister for Railways: There is no restriction, but the method is different.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Leonora says that these men have to pay in Perth. I admit that it is claimed to be a part of the duty of the Commonwealth to look

after these soldiers, but I am confident that the citizens of Western Australia would not object to the Government giving free passes on the tramways for a certain period, until these men are able to earn their own living by some form of employment. Not even one voice has been raised in Fremantle against granting these passes. But the time has arrived for obtaining a correct balance sheet of the Perth Tramways.

The Minister for Railways: In what respect is the balance sheet deficient?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It should show depreciation and sinking fund, so that hon. members may be enabled to see whether or not the tramways are paying. Perth tramway fares are high. Fremantle originally charged the same as Perth for tram tickets, namely, 2s. 6d. per dozen. But immediately Fremantle reduced the charge to 1s. for six tickets, the revenue increased, because more tickets were purchased and more people travelled. In Fremantle the people habitually ride instead of walk. Every man, woman and child in Fremantle rides, on an average, four times per week. A school child under 12 years can travel anywhere over the Fremantle system on a ticket costing 1s. for 13. There is also the concession of a three-penny return ticket to children attending continuation classes. I trust the Minister will see that in future we are furnished with a correct balance sheet of the Perth tramway system.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.33]: I agree with the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) that the Perth trams are overcrowded and badly managed. The Minister blames the shortage of cars for this; but I feel perfectly certain that by altered management the present cars could be made to carry almost double the number of passengers they are now carrying. Living at Mt. Lawley, I have frequently observed an interval of from 10 to 15 minutes between cars, after which one finds three or four cars coming along on top of each other. The other day, wishing to come to the House, I went to the Town Hall corner at 1 o'clock sharp; and it was 14 minutes before a car came along. This at the busiest hour of the day. The first car to come along was immediately followed by three other cars. There were four cars within one minute. As a result, the first car was overcrowded, while the three cars following were practically empty. I have noticed, too, that there are big clocks at various points to register the time the cars pass those places; but the time of passing is not always registered. When I have spoken to conductors on the matter, they have told me that the clocks are not always right. Thus there is really no check. The officer in charge of this branch of the work, if he made a tour of the city occasionally, would observe these conditions for himself. As practically a visitor to Perth, and it is visitors who observe conditions more than residents do, I wish to congratulate the department on the courteous lot of men who run the tramcars. Those men go out of their way to perform acts of courtesy and kindness to women and children. I have never yet heard an unkind word spoken by a tramway man. Regarding the position

of Commissioner of Railways and Tramways, I understand Mr. Short's appointment terminates on the 31st December next. Now, the war has brought forward a large number of men in all walks of life, and amongst the new men who have come forward are hundreds who have taken up the management of railways on the different Fronts as well as in England. I consider it would be an advantage to this State if the appointment of a Commissioner, or of Commissioners, whichever it is to be, were deferred for six months, which would enable some of the promising young men to apply for any position, or positions, which this State may have to offer. Therefore, it would be wise to secure Mr. Short's services for a further six months, with that end in view.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [9.37]: I have listened to the criticisms on the running of the tramway system which have fallen from the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) and the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith), and I am quite sure they are correct in stating that the trams are overcrowded at certain times of the day. At the same time the Government are being urged to reduce tramway fares, whereby, as the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) points out, the traffic would be increased. No doubt, if the fares were decreased, the number of passengers would increase; but we simply have not enough cars. Now that the war is over, there may be a possibility of an alteration being made in the fares; but we must first have a chance of obtaining rolling stock at a reasonable price. The Railway Commissioner's report contains a list of prices of stores and material used in the construction of cars; and that list shows that these goods have become very costly since the war, prices in some instances having risen by 200 and 300 per cent. It would be unwise to purchase material for the construction of cars at this juncture, or just now to import cars, if this latter were even possible. Out of the money now being provided the department will be able to put the present stock of cars in good running order. New cars are under construction at the workshops. When the rolling stock becomes reasonably enlarged, the subject of the reduction of fares may safely be taken into consideration.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you check the administration costs at the workshops? Those costs used to be pretty high. They are not shown in the report. They used to be.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Does the hon. member mean, what the Railways charge the Tramways?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes; for administration.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is shown on page 84 of the Commissioner's report. As regards soldiers, the Government have given such concessions as have been sought by the Returned Soldiers' Association; and the subject of concessions to soldiers on Government railways and tramways was discussed at the conference of commis-

sioners which met in Melbourne, the idea being to establish uniformity of custom in the various States, and to treat all soldiers alike. As for the appointment of a successor to Mr. Short, that subject will be dealt with more particularly when the Bill now before the House comes up for further discussion. The Government have now under consideration means of filling the position next year, but they have not yet arrived at a final decision in that regard. When such a decision has been reached, it will be announced.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Electricity Supply, £28,201:

Mr. SMITH: This is a vote to which I desire the Committee's special attention. The branch is losing the State a considerable amount of money. On reference to the balance sheet for the financial year 1917-18 it appears that a loss was made of £10,611, which is a very serious loss, especially when made by a business undertaking which we were promised would return considerable profits every year. The replies of the Minister to the questions I asked this afternoon shed a lurid light on the business arrangements in connection with the Government electric works. Roughly speaking, it appears that on every £1,000 worth of electricity sold by the Government to the Perth City Council, the Government lose £150; and I understand the Government are under contract to supply Perth with electric current at this price for the next 50 years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You need not worry about that. That will rectify itself directly.

Mr. SMITH: I see no signs of any improvement. I also asked at what price the Government were buying back the electricity they sold to the Perth City Council, in order to supply the Government departments and the railways; and I was rather surprised to learn that the Government are paying the City Council 1½d. per unit for that which they sell to them at ¾d. per unit.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But Perth has to reticulate the electricity, to carry it all over the city, to stand losses and so forth.

The Minister for Railways: The City Council have to give certain services.

Mr. SMITH: But those services do not cost ¾d. per unit.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Very near it.

Mr. SMITH: Nothing like it. At any rate, the Government have been and are making the City council a present of about £2,500 per annum under the electricity arrangement. This view is borne out by the fact of the loss of £10,600 as per this balance sheet for 1917-18. The present to the City council equals nearly 25 per cent. of that loss.

The Minister for Railways: It is a good bargain for the City Council at present.

Mr. SMITH: Yes; but for the Government it is a most unbusinesslike bargain. If this loss is going to continue the Government should try and come to some arrangement with the Perth City Council for a modification of their agreement, or else adopt means for supplying the Government departments with their own electricity.

The Minister for Railways: It is an agreement we have entered into under an Act of Parliament and we cannot alter it.

Mr. SMITH: There should be nothing to prevent the Government supplying their own departments with electricity.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have no doubt that the electrical plant will show a profit to the Government.

The Minister for Railways: We expect a profit this year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know whether it is yet in full working order.

The Minister for Railways: It is not quite finished yet.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They have been unable until lately to supply any great quantity of current. Of course the more they supply the greater will be the reduction in the cost. The city of Perth receives electricity in bulk, they have transformers at their sub-stations and they reticulate it throughout the city and carry it to the public buildings. They have also to keep everything in good order, and it is impossible for the Perth City Council to sell current at the same rate at which they receive it. While the Government have made arrangements with the local authorities to supply electricity in certain areas at a certain rate, they are selling to the small consumers outside those areas at a rate at which it would be impossible for the local authorities to supply. That has a tendency to induce people to establish factories in areas outside those in which contracts have been made. So far as Fremantle is concerned, I took an active part in inducing the authorities there to take current from this source. If I had thought the Government were going to take the action they have done I guarantee that Fremantle would not have come in.

The Minister for Railways: What do you mean?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I refer to the offer to provide current to certain people at a penny. They have been offering inducements to firms to go outside the boundaries to establish industries, because they can supply current there at cheaper rates. It is not fair for the Government to adopt such an attitude.

The Minister for Railways: Do you suggest that the Commissioner of Railways proposed that those people should go to outside localities to establish their industries because he could supply them there with cheaper current?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I will give the Minister an instance. Messrs. Scaddan and Quigley, whose mill is at East Perth, have to pay 1½d. per unit for the electricity they use at their mill. The authorities cannot afford to sell it cheaper in Perth. But Padbury and Co., of Guildford, get it for less than 1d. The result is that we are driving people away from certain districts, and sending them outside the metropolitan area. I maintain that the Government cannot afford to supply small consumers for that amount.

Mr. Davies: Padbury has a special concession because he provided the land on which a sub-station is built.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We can rest assured that if the Government obtained land from Padbury they had to pay through the nose for it. Other industries are fixed in a similar manner. The other day an industry was started at Fremantle, and the Fremantle people were faced with the fact that to induce that industry to start the price of the current had to be brought down. I maintain that is unfair competition, and it would not be recognised in any business house in the State or in any part of the world.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—State Batteries, £72,210; Tourist Resorts, Cave Houses, etc., £6,500—agreed to.

Vote—Yandanooka Estate, £12,400.

Mr. MALEY: Will the Premier explain the increase in this vote?

The PREMIER: This land has been set apart for the settlement of returned soldiers. The proposal is to purchase stock to eat off the superabundance of grass on the estate.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Albany Cold Stores, £1,117; Aborigines' Cattle Station, Moola Bulla, £5,407; Government Refrigerating Works, £3,635; Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, £3,471—agreed to.

Vote—Metropolitan Abattoirs and Saleyards, £10,000.

Mr. BROUN: There is necessity for some better railway facilities being provided at these yards, where a tremendous congestion occurs at various times in the year. Complaints have been made that stock, although it arrived on time at Midland, has not reached the saleyards until long after the sales had started, owing to the lack of facilities. I hope something will be done to provide for the more rapid unloading of the stock.

The PREMIER: I assure the hon. member that I will make careful inquiries into the matter with a view to remedying any inconvenience.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Perth City Markets, £975; State Dairy Farm (Claremont), £3,296—agreed to.

Vote—Butter and Bacon Factories, £18,625.

Mr. MALEY: I should like to know whether the provision for subsidies to the companies that are being formed comes under this division?

The Premier: No. That will come under the Loan Estimates.

Mr. MALEY: Will an opportunity be given for discussing it?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Woolclassing, £1,225—agreed to.

Vote—Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Undertaking, £84,974:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, AND WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE, AND DRAINAGE (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [10.3]: Hon. members are aware from what has passed previously that during the last year there has been a subdivision of the Water Supply Department, and that the metropolitan portion



is now kept separately. During the past year also we have been able to make a number of improvements in the way of providing conveniences to allow of the public being attended to at the office more expeditiously than before. Instead of clients having to go from pillar to post, we have arranged a portion of the office, as in the case of ledger accounts at a bank, where those clients can be attended to without delay. We have also provided increased facilities for the owners of rateable properties. This has saved the service of some 8,000 rate notices. In regard to the rate books, prior to the rearrangement of the department the services of the officers of the Perth City Council were availed of to some extent, and our books were written up by our clerks in overtime, which cost a considerable amount of money. By our rearrangement we have entirely obviated the necessity for availing ourselves of this assistance, and the work has been done by our own officers in ordinary office hours, no payment for overtime having to be made. Moreover, we have been able to get our rate book written up and our notices sent out two months earlier than ever before, and as a result we have received something like £7,000 more at a proportionately earlier date. We have also devoted attention to the question of meter reading and excess accounts. A tremendous number of accounts were sent out for excess water, accounts rising from 1d. to various sums. I directed that where the account for excess water was under 1s. it should not be sent out as a notice, but should be kept as a debit in the book and included in the next year's account. I had found that the clerical work involved and the cost of the stationery more than equalled the value of these small accounts. We have also brought into vogue an extension of the card system for rating purposes. A number of the office returns sent out were more of an academic style than of practical use. I have cut out as many of these as possible, for it seemed to me ridiculous to make out a lot of returns which were very rarely read and still more rarely required. This undertaking is essentially one for the giving to the people served by it a good supply of water at the lowest possible cost, and this can only be done by cutting out unnecessary expenditure. The rates for the year 1918-19 are, as before, water rates 10d., sewerage 1s. and storm water 5d. The capital expenditure to the 30th June last was £1,983,000. The amount of money expended in the previous year, as near as can be, was £60,000, the principal items being the supplementary bore at Loftus-street £8,000. This turned out very successful, and saved us much anxiety in regard to last summer's water. It is considered by the officers to be sufficient to enable us to extend over probably another couple of years in connection with the water required. In Coogee street we extended the 18-inch main at a cost of £2,000, and we enlarged the main at Richmond at a cost of £1,198. The enlargement of the outlet delivery main at Mount Eliza has cost £13,530. The main put in there is larger than is needed for present requirements, but I had to decide between putting in a main

of 24 inches, which might in five years or eight years time require to be supplemented, and putting in, as we have done, a 3-ft. main which will probably last us for 20 years. The difference in the cost is only £4,500, and it seemed to me to be practical economy. In service connections we have spent £6,000 and in connection with meters £5,000. In regard to sewerage, we have constructed two new filter beds at Burswood at a cost of £3,993. This work is not yet quite complete. In regard to storm water drainage, we have put in the Hyde Park drain at a cost of £12,950 and in connection with Royal-street and Wellington-street drains, we have carried out relining operations at a cost of £1,100. The total expenditure on these large items was £56,431. I mention these items to show that the officers of the department are not only carefully regarding present day requirements, but are looking forward to what will be required in the years to come.

Hon. P. Collier: Will the bore supplies be sufficient for a number of years to come?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think we need have no anxiety in connection with the water supply for at least another three or four years, possibly more. The bore at Loftus-street has proved so successful that I do not think there need be any apprehension. At the same time the department is not standing still. The hon. member knows what I am about to say in connection with what will be required in the years to come. For many years past there has been a project to erect another reservoir at the Canning. As far back as 1890 the question of the supply rested between the Victoria reservoir and the very place where the Canning reservoir is to go, but for financial reasons the firm of contractors with whom I was then connected preferred the Victoria reservoir. The estimated revenue for the current year is £142,250 or £2,000 less than last year. One of the reasons for this is that we have turned over to the Railway Department the supply of water at Walters Brook, from which we had previously £4,260 per annum.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You should have done that a long time ago.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am pleased to find that the hon. member supports me on this point. I recognised it was only just that the Railway Department should have that supply. The income accrued during 1917-18 was £144,272 and the amount of money which was due from the ratepayers to the department on the 1st July last was £26,518. I cannot say that the whole of that is recoverable, for I have not yet been able to go thoroughly into the question. I may say that there is a number of very large assessments in Perth, and in the case of some of them it has been necessary for the department to exercise a little moderation, not in the direction of reducing the indebtedness, but in regard to insisting on the collection of it. We are all aware that many institutions during this war have had their sources of revenue very considerably depleted. It seemed to me that if it was a fair thing for a moratorium to be declared in regard to certain things, it was not out of place for the Minis-

ter dealing with a supply of this sort to extend the same consideration to those who have been interfered with as a result of the war.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They did not give you much consideration. They summoned you for yours.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I came out on top at any rate. I am sorry that the Minister of the day did not let the summons go on, because I was assured by Mr. Sept. Burt that I should have won the case.

Hon. P. Collier: Who was the Minister?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Daglish. We have not extended that consideration to a few particular individuals only. If any case has been brought under our notice, in which a small debtor has been trying to pay his way but has been unable to do so, I have not allowed him to be unduly pressed. The case, however, had to be a genuine one. Even with all this the collections were 90 per cent. of the accrued income and arrears. In the matter of cash collections, we expect to get in this year £143,000. I have already explained the change that was made in connection with the Under Secretary. I was under the impression that the note in regard to his salary was full, and I regret that the figures were not put in, so that the time of the leader of the Opposition could have been saved in referring to it. Whoever may occupy my position next year, and will be introducing these Estimates, will have from the Under Secretary notes which should satisfy any member of the Committee.

Hon. P. Collier: I hope it is understood that I made no reflection upon the Under Secretary.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know the hon. member is quite as much impressed with the good qualities of Mr. Munt as I am myself. Last year's item in connection with the Under Secretary was £433, which represented the amount due to Mr. Trethowan while occupying the position of Under Secretary for Water Supply. This year the amount for the Under Secretary will appear as £200, the balance of £450 being found in the Public Works Department vote. These departments are now being administered by one Under Secretary at £650 a year, instead of two at £1,250. The total expenditure for the undertaking during 1917-18 was £149,660, compared with the estimated expenditure for 1918 of £151,826. The excess of £2,166 does not give hon. members a full view of the position, and they may reasonably say, "Where does the economy come in when you are increasing the expenditure." Although it would not be difficult to show that the clerical staff, and so forth, has been considerably reduced, there are many expenses this year which cannot well be avoided.

Hon. P. Collier: Have you considered the reduction in the water charges on the gold-fields?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will come to that later. I am pleased to say that, so far, we have had no complaints of any bad smell from Burswood Island for some months past in connection with the sewerage scheme.

I do not know whether the smells still exist, or whether people have become accustomed to them, but I am inclined to think that the process which Mr. Parr adopted some months ago has produced good results, and will produce even better in the future. He has adopted what is known as the chloride of lime process of dealing with the effluent, and seems to have put matters quite right.

Mr. Foley: The Perth City Council have done a great deal in this matter during the last 12 months.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Perth City Council have the right to go where they please on any portion of the sewerage works. There has been no complaint from them up to date. We shall have the other filter bed completed in about three months time, and I think we shall then be giving the City the best that we can give under the system of septic treatment.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [10.22]: I was disappointed that the Minister did not tell us about the suggestion he made last year with regard to the collection of water rates. He then stated he had a scheme in mind by which he hoped to effect a considerable saving in the collection of these rates. Apparently, it was intended that this work should be handed over to the City Council, and the water rates collected under the same procedure as adopted by the Council in the collection of the ordinary municipal rates. That was an excellent suggestion, and I am sorry it has not been put into effect.

The Minister for Works: I will tell the hon. member about that.

Mr. SMITH: I am sure such a scheme would give a considerable amount of satisfaction to those who have to bear the cost of the undertaking. In the matter of deep drainage, there are several places in the city which have not yet been connected up. Whilst we are being threatened with an epidemic, I should like to know why these people are not compelled to connect up. The sewerage system has now been established for a number of years, and there has been plenty of time for the Government to overcome any of the difficulties that might have occurred. These places have been served by the antiquated pan system, and constitute a menace to the rest of the community. If the City Council, or the Health Department, are not able to enforce the making of these connections I think the Minister should introduce some legislation to compel people to connect up and make the sewerage system a complete one. Up to the present the city has been contaminated by these horrible night carts passing through it almost every night. There can be no reason for a continuance of this system. When are we likely to have the sewerage system absolutely completed? Cannot the Minister do something to finalise the matter? There is also the question of improving our water supply. For many years we have been promised that a new reservoir shall be established in the hills, and Perth given an up-to-date water supply. The supply we have at present is a very good sub-

stitute, but it can be greatly improved. The Minister might go into that question, and bring the city up to date. There is no doubt it is lamentably behind other modern cities in this respect. I was pleased to hear that the Minister had suspended the payment of rates to those who were pressed on account of the war, but I hope in extending this grace to the ratepayers that we are not going to be involved in any big losses. Is it the intention that these rates should be remitted for all time, or that the department should try to recover them at some future date?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [10.27]: I am obliged to the hon. member for reminding me about the collection of the water rates. The matter has not been lost sight of. I had given instructions that the matter should be gone carefully into, but, as the hon. member will understand, I was met with considerable opposition. It was against all the canons of usage in the department. I was not able to pursue the matter to the fullest extent that I had intended owing to lack of time, but I am strongly of opinion that we can make an arrangement with the Perth City Council to collect our water rates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Collect your own, and make sure of your money.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: I intend to prepare a scheme in this connection, but would not put it into force without getting Parliamentary sanction. Even if I could do so without that sanction I do not think it would be right for me to take such a course without giving members an opportunity of discussing the matter. For years I have been of opinion that this system can be adopted.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot differentiate between Perth and any other municipality. You must serve all alike.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: I think it can be done, and I am going to make an effort to get out a scheme by which we can see how far we can go in the matter. As to deep drainage, I am not quite sure what the hon. member means. In several portions of Perth deep drainage has not yet been introduced because, for one thing, the money has not been available, and also because these districts, being sparsely populated, would not return a revenue sufficient to provide interest and sinking fund. If the hon. member means that there are about the City buildings which could be connected but are not connected with the drainage system, while I entirely agree with him that they should be connected, yet I cannot overlook the fact that the Government themselves are somewhat of a sinner in this matter. Take the Barracks, for instance; they are not connected. However, it would not be right for the Government to connect the Barracks and other State buildings which will have to come down when funds are available to erect up-to-date accommodation. Several large institutions, however, which are not connected, have been served with notices to connect, and unless those notices are complied with within a certain time the department will step in. As to water supply, the

draughtsmen and engineers have been at work for some years on the Canning reservoir, and they are still pursuing the matter; but the scheme will cost £250,000, and therefore we must wait for financial sunshine. Still, Perth is being furnished with a very fair water supply; and the bore water is said to be purer than the hills supply. In the matter of consideration for ratepayers, the hon. member need have no nervousness. Water rates are a charge on property, and can be recovered at any time. The Committee will agree that the Government would not have done well to push people who intend to pay and will pay eventually.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Goldfields Water Supply Undertaking, £112,859:

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.35]: Ever since I have represented Avon in this Assembly, I have had something to say on this vote; and I am compelled to bring the matter forward again, because the Minister controlling the scheme has stated that the position of the scheme would be thoroughly revised, and this up to date has not been done. Mere promises do not assist the development of the country. The late Lord Forrest intended the Goldfields Water Supply scheme to be a national scheme for the development of primary industry—in the first instance on the goldfields, and then, the capacity of the scheme being proved sufficient, in the agricultural areas through which the pipe line passes. But the policy under Mr. W. D. Johnson was that the scheme must be a payable proposition in itself.

Hon. P. Collier: Who enunciated the policy that the scheme must be a payable proposition in itself?

Mr. HARRISON: Mr. W. D. Johnson.

Hon. P. Collier: Never.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes. He said it three times at a conference presided over by Mr. T. H. Bath. All that the farmers ask is that the scheme shall be a payable proposition from their point of view. At 6s. per thousand gallons, the water is unusable for agricultural purposes. The Government are about to assist farmers through the Industries Assistance Board to carry sheep and cattle, particularly sheep. Unless sheep farming is combined with wheat growing, the latter cannot be a success; and unless the farmers get a cheap water supply they will not be able to make good the capital already locked up in their holdings. The essentials of agriculture are soil, water, and climatic conditions. From the latest report I have of the Water Supply Department, it appears that the metropolitan area, during the year 1915-16, used over 238 million gallons of water from the scheme, and during 1916-17 over 167 million gallons, and that the total revenue received for this quantity of water was £2,500 each year. Kalgoorlie and Boulder used 363 million and 324 million gallons in those two years respectively, and contributed £107,000 and £95,000. The agricultural areas, which are always spoken of as one of the greatest drawbacks to the success of the undertaking, are the largest debtors

for scheme water. Between Northam and Southern Cross consumers took over 67 million gallons in 1915-16, and 66 million gallons in the following year, and their contributions amounted to £15,700 and £15,400 for the two years—as against the metropolitan area's contribution of £2,500. Why should the metropolitan area get this advantage?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Because the one includes the revenue from water pipes, and the other does not.

Mr. HARRISON: The hon. member can take it that way if he likes. This State has paid back a good proportion of the capital cost of the scheme through the sinking fund; close on two-thirds has been paid back. We expect that the money will be paid back by 1927. But what about the assets of the Mundaring Weir, the pumping plant, and other services? Are we not going to take them into account? The Mundaring Weir cost a lot of money to erect, and the pumping plants and stations also involved considerable expenditure. Then we expected the pipes to be worn out in a short period, but through the experiments which have been carried out by our engineers, the life of those pipes has been considerably increased. Therefore, we have another asset in the pipes. It is time, I contend, that the whole position in regard to the water scheme was reviewed. If we are going to get the revenue that we should it is no use keeping the water locked up in the Mundaring Weir. The water will do no good there. If we expect to get revenue from the railways, and if we want the Agricultural Bank to have its interest and capital paid, the farmers must be assisted by way of getting cheaper water. So far as the goldfields are concerned, the returns are decreasing annually. This year's figures will be a quarter of a million less than those of the preceding year, and in nearly every instance we find that the mining companies are complaining about the high cost of water. Take Westonia. It has an abundant supply of salt water in the mines, and that water has to be pumped out, and the companies are charged 10s. a thousand gallons for Mundaring water which they consume in connection with their operations. This kind of thing is likely to make all the difference between profit and loss, and if we are not careful we will compel a number of the mines to close down and many miners will be thrown out of employment. The re-assessing of the standard value of gold was spoken of when the mining estimates were being discussed, but other powers will have to consider that question. Here, however, we have a matter which the Western Australian Government can attend to. Are we to sit down and prove that we are in earnest with regard to primary production?

Hon. P. Collier: Are we downhearted?

Mr. HARRISON: No, but sometimes I think we are playing leap-frog. I trust the Minister for Works will not play leap-frog in connection with this business, but that he will let the farmers know exactly where they stand. I have before me the recommenda-

tions of the Royal Commission in connection with this matter, and if it were not for wearying the House I would read them item by item. Why do we appoint these Royal Commissions if we are not going to take any notice of their recommendations? What is the use of the members of commissions going about the country getting evidence if we are not going to pay some attention to the suggestions they have to offer?

Hon. P. Collier: It was part of the price you dictated to the Government.

Mr. HARRISON: It was not.

Hon. P. Collier: If not you, your party.

Mr. HARRISON: The party did not. What I want to know is whether we are in earnest about the development of our primary industries, gold mining, agriculture, or pastoral. If we turn to page 735 of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, Appendix 9, we find that comparisons are made with South Australia. It is stated in the report—

The first is the South Australian system, which provides reticulated water to the agricultural areas almost regardless of cost, relying on the indirect benefit to the community for its return. The Bundaleer and Beetaloo schemes for instance, which cost over two millions sterling, only return a gross revenue of 1.57 per cent. towards interest, sinking fund, and depreciation. Another scheme now authorised for the West Coast at a cost of £1,500,000, contemplates a return of less than one-half (10s.) per cent.

They are not looking for direct revenue from this capital outlay. Neither did the late Lord Forrest look for direct revenue from the goldfields water scheme. It was a national undertaking, and now we are charging 9 per cent.

The Minister for Works: When the late Lord Forrest first introduced the scheme to Parliament, he made it out that it would be a paying proposition from the jump.

Mr. HARRISON: Indirectly.

The Minister for Works: No. Directly. I was there at the time and you were not.

Mr. HARRISON: What was the position of the mines then? How much gold had been won from them? How much has the State benefited since then from the production from those mines on the Golden Mile? The Government should not now attempt to cripple enterprise by overtaxing the industry.

The Minister for Works: That is not the policy of the Government. The people should be honest and carry out what they undertook to do and that was to pay.

Mr. HARRISON: They paid when they had the money to pay. The Government are now compelling many of them to pay under the Industries Assistance Act.

The Minister for Works: There is a sum of £15,000 that I will have to write off.

Mr. HARRISON: How much did the Minister collect last year?

The Minister for Works: I will give you the figures directly.

Mr. HARRISON: Can a man on some of the agricultural areas, where it takes 10

bushels to cover the cost of growing the crop pay the price the Government charge when he receives a return of only 5 bushels?

The Minister for Works: How many have been sued?

Mr. HARRISON: I do not say that any have been sued. The position is that if they have not the money they cannot pay, but I will tell the Minister what they have done. They have devoted the whole of their energies to the development of the land to bring it into a state of production, and if this year's yield comes out at anything like the present anticipations it is expected that it will reduce the capital outlay to the extent of something like half a million sterling. If the last year's forecast had been attained by those farmers, instead of having a £400,000 increase on their obligations they would have written off from £200,000 to £300,000 of their past obligations. These men on the land cannot do miracles. If rust and septoria affect their crops they cannot make good the results and produce an average yield. They are helping the country to find the money for the Treasury. We have had it already from various Ministers that the sheep and wool returns this side of Geraldton are equal to those to the north of Geraldton. These men on the goldfields water supply not only have to pay for their own water supply but, as taxpayers, they have to pay for water supplies in other parts of the State, from which they receive no benefit.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not pay for even their own.

Mr. HARRISON: They do when they have the money to pay with. There are certain farmers under the board who have made good and paid for the water supply scheme.

The Minister for Works: We are not disputing anything.

Mr. HARRISON: My protest more particularly is this: we have had it again and again from Ministers controlling the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme that something was going to be done, and I say it is high time the farmers learnt where they stand. There has been deputation after deputation in an endeavour to secure redress. The Royal Commission recommended redress, but no notice has been taken of the recommendation. These men on the land are not consuming half the water for which they are rated. It is time some alteration was made. Next year I will move for a reduction in the vote unless something shall have been done in the meantime.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.55]: The hon. member quoted figures, but he did not tell us that there has been spent on water supplies in agricultural areas no less a sum than £370,728, not including townsites, which cost extra.

Mr. Teesdale: And they will not pay their meter rents.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The people of the State are paying interest and sinking fund on that money. All that the farmer has to pay is his share of it. The financial results of the operations of the year 1916-17 from agricultural extensions are, income £11,244, expenses

exclusive of main conduit and headworks £11,877, leaving a deficit of £633. Those people are not charged at all for the main and the headworks and the pumping plant, yet hon. members come here and complain, after stating that they got a definite understanding from Mr. Johnson at Tammin that the people in those agricultural areas must be held responsible for payment. The hon. member himself says that Mr. Johnson told them distinctly that it was intended to make it a paying proposition.

The Minister for Works: And they signed an agreement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course. Mr. Johnson said, "No, I will not do it unless you can show that the people want it and will guarantee to pay." And at their request, signed by almost every person in the district, he put out the pipes; and because the rain came those people refused to pay.

Mr. Harrison: I do not think you are quite fair.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is absolutely fair. When the rain came they objected to pay for the service water.

Hon. F. Collier: They tore up the agreement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They are prepared to pay for the water only when they use it, forgetting that the State has to pay all the time.

Mr. Johnston: The board has paid over £120,000.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Much more than that has been paid, and for a long time these people were charged for only the water, and not for the cost of the pipes. In some places the water cost £4 per thousand gallons to deliver, and they were charged only £1 per thousand gallons, and they did not pay even that.

Mr. Johnston: It was pretty dear water.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not in the circumstances. It would have been cheap at any price. I hope there will always be rain, but I want to tell the hon. member that the water rate those people are paying is merely an insurance rate in the case of another drought.

Mr. Harrison: There is no security with the insurance.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. The water is there all the time. I do not think the outcry on the part of the hon. member is justified. No other portion of the State has grumbled over the water supply given to the farmers from the goldfields water supply, which they are justly entitled to pay for.

Mr. Harrison: What other agricultural part of the State pays for water?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Every part of it. All dams, reservoirs, and the like are paid for from revenue. The hon. member must not think that the farmers are paying everything.

Mr. Johnston: The water is worth 1s. 6d. per thousand gallons to the farmers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is about time someone said to the farming community that it is only a part of the State, that the State intends to deal fairly and justly by it, and no more, and that it is intended to treat all

people alike. The last people to complain should be the farmers. The farming industry has had more done for it than any other industry in the State. If we gave them everything they would not return any thanks. At present the farmers are not dealing fairly by the State.

Mr. Harrison: Do you think they are not dealing fairly by the State, or that they are not energetic?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not think they are doing the fair thing by the State. No doubt it is the duty of the State to assist the farming community as far as possible, just as it is its duty in respect to other sections of the people, but the farmers have no right to demand special consideration which is not given to others.

Vote put and passed.

Votes — Other Hydraulic Undertakings Chargeable to Revenue, £31,421; Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £185,569 —agreed to.

This completed the General Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Resolutions as passed in Committee of Supply, granting supplies amounting to £3,407,064 from the Consolidated Revenue, and a sum not exceeding £185,569 from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account, were formally reported.

On motion by the Colonial Treasurer, report from Committee of Supply adopted.

Committee of Ways and Means.

The House having resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Stubbs in the Chair,

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irwin) [11.5]: I move—

That towards making good the supply to His Majesty a sum not exceeding £3,407,064 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Western Australia, and a sum not exceeding £185,569 from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account.

Question put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 11.6 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 29th November, 1918.

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

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

### BILLS—FIRST READINGS.

- 1, Postponement of Debts Act Continuation.
- 2, Roads Act Continuation.
- 3, Industries Assistance Act Continuation.
- 4, Sale of Liquor Regulation Act Continuation.
- 5, Licensing Act Amendment Continuation.
- 6, Dividend Duties Act Amendment.
- 7, Treasury Bonds Deficiency.
- 8, Income Tax.
- 9, Government Tramways Act Amendment.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1917-18.

In Committee of Supply.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Hon. W. J. George, Minister, in charge.

State Trading Concerns—

Vote—Shipment of cattle from the North-West, £12,870—agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS presented the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure on account of the State Trading Concerns for the year ending 30th June, 1918.

Vote—State Brick Works, £6,470:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [4.47]: During the past 12 months the trade in connection with the brick works has been particularly dull. This has been caused largely through the restriction of Government operations which has naturally affected the financial working of this and other trading concerns. The financial statement of the brick works has been laid on the Table of the House. It has been duly audited and found to be correct. The loss during the 12 months was £2,702. The works were closed down in June last because we had then on hand nearly 1½ million bricks, and they filled all the space we had whereon to stack them. We sold those bricks and the yard having been cleared at the end of August, we started operations again. The plant is supposed to be capable of producing 180,000 bricks weekly. We started on a reduced quantity, and we were not able to get up to the higher figures owing to the scarcity of skilled labour. The manager reports that so far as the trade that is being done now is concerned, the outlook is brighter than it has been for some time. When the works were started it was anticipated that the Government would require at least half the output of the works. The war, however, brought on a curtailment of the work, and consequently during the past 12 months or two years, the works have been principally kept going on private orders. Since the commencement of operation the works have turned out 9,000,000 bricks. The total loss to date has been £5,250. This includes £4,198 interest due and paid to the Treasury on moneys borrowed. I want to emphasise that fact. The total interest and depreciation to the 30th June last amounts to—depreciation £2,678, interest £4,198, a total of £6,877. If we deduct from this