

session. This is indeed a long period, but as the leader of the Opposition has been in conference with the Premier on the matter and they have decided that this is the period during which the House is to adjourn, I am not going to raise any objection.

Mr. Scaddan: I did not decide.

Mr. TAYLOR: The leader of the Opposition attended a conference, and was one of those who decided that this was a most convenient time both for the affairs of the country and the convenience of members of the House. In my opinion, a seven weeks' adjournment is too long, and the Premier himself if he had thought out the matter without taking into consideration some of his supporters would have met the House again early in January.

The Premier: I also considered your side of the House.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is, however, most important that the Premier should attend this conference in the Eastern States, and I hope he will be successful in his mission. At the same time I enter my protest at such a long adjournment. This is the third adjournment during this session, and such a thing is unknown in the Parliamentary history of Western Australia since we have had responsible Government.

Mr. Walker: It amounts to a quarter of the year.

Mr. TAYLOR: It is practically a quarter of the year. I am not going to divide the House on the question.

Mr. SPEAKER [6.34 p.m., Friday]: I desire to say the few words which are customary on this occasion. On behalf of the Chairman of Committees, the temporary Chairmen, the officers of the House, and on my own behalf, I wish to thank hon. members who have spoken for their kind expressions of good will towards us, and to offer them our best wishes for the coming season. I thank the House for the courtesy and forbearance which on all occasions hon. members have shown towards us. I think that so far as the session has gone it has passed off with good feeling on all sides. I do not think the business of the House has suffered in consequence. I hope the Premier will have a very successful mission to the Eastern States, because on his success depends the well-being

of the State for the next year. I join with hon. members in hoping that there will be a speedy termination of the war, and that the ending will be one victorious to the British Empire. I again express, on behalf of myself, the Chairman and temporary Chairmen of Committees, and the officers of the House our best wishes to hon. members for a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 6.36 p.m. (Friday).*

## Legislative Council,

*Friday, 1st December, 1916.*

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

### MOTION—PRIVATE BILLS.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.33]: I move—

1, That it is, in the opinion of this House, desirable that all Bills having for their object the granting of concessions to specific persons or corporations should be brought before Parliament as private Bills. 2, That it be an instruction to the Standing Orders Committee of this House to revise and bring up to date the Standing Orders relating to private Bills.

The motion is designed, in my opinion, to facilitate to a great extent the operations of this Chamber. Hon. members will recollect that during the last few days we have had three Bills which might be described as concession Bills, two of which the

House has dealt with, one of which is in process of being dealt with; and I understand there is before another place another Bill in the nature of a concession Bill still awaiting the pleasure of the Assembly. When I say a concession Bill, I mean a Bill which grants to some specific individual or some corporation certain valuable rights for the purpose of that individual or corporation making a profit by the exercise of those rights. As this is a matter that is dealt with in practically all countries by means of what is known as a private Bill, I think we would be wise if we adopted the procedure in force in England and in some of the other States of the Commonwealth. In dealing with this subject of a private Bill, I mean, not a Bill introduced by a private member, but a Bill in the meaning or the significance of the term as used in our Standing Orders. When I say Standing Orders, I do not alone mean the little volume which is in front of every member and which does not contain the Standing Orders in connection with private Bills—for the sake of economy in printing and on account of the fact that these private Bills are so little used in this Parliament—but I think this is a state of affairs which should be remedied. The Bills I have before alluded to are the Special Lease (Stirling Estate) Bill, the Special Lease (Lake Clifton) Bill, and the Kingia Grass Tree Bill. All of these confer rights which are presumably valuable—else the applicants would not be applying for them—to private individuals or companies. That being so, I think it would be well if Parliament were to consider these matters apart from the glamour which the fact of its being introduced by the Government throws over any Bill. Perhaps I am wrong in using the word “glamour”; perhaps I should say the bias of feeling which is induced either one way or the other by the fact that the Government have introduced such a measure. Furthermore, in the interests of the general public, it is as well that this is so. The Standing Orders in regard to private Bills provide that when such a Bill is applied for it is open to any person who feels interested, on seeing the public advertisement in a newspaper which is necessary before the private Bill is introduced, to come forward and state his ob-

jections, if any, to the Bill. Certain fees have to be paid by the promoters or applicants in respect to a private Bill. I think this is only right where a valuable consideration is being sought for special purposes, and not for public purposes. I think it right that those seeking for it should at all events pay the State for the expense and trouble which the officers of the State are put to in regard to the application. Again, I venture to say that this House or another place would gain very much more information about a Bill treated as a private Bill than is the case under our present mode of procedure, for this reason: The examination of a Bill or a project with which it deals by a select committee is part of the statutory process by which a private Bill is brought before the House. The fees in relation to a private Bill are not extravagant, although in some cases they are somewhat amusing. In my opinion they require to be revised to a certain extent. For instance, I have here our Standing Orders on private Bills which hon. members will find, if they look up the old, unabridged edition of our Standing Orders, of which there are several in the Clerk's office. We have items like this: For every day on which the clerk shall inquire into the application of the Standing Orders two guineas.” It points to a glorious vista of profit by means of long adjournments and further repeated searching by the Clerk at two guineas per diem. I might explain that the Clerk does not get any benefit from this money, because another Standing Order provides that the Clerk shall render account of the fees received, and pay over the money into Consolidated Revenue—which must be very annoying to the Clerk. But there are several instances in which this schedule of fees, and indeed the Standing Orders themselves, could be revised and brought up to date. I want to ensure when this House deals with the granting of a concession it shall have before it automatically, without effort on its part, all the possible information that can be obtained pro and con.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is it absolutely necessary to bring these before Parliament?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: No, but I think it very advisable that they should be brought before Parliament. In the past not always

have they been brought before Parliament, and there has been a good deal of heart-burning and bickering over that course being followed. I think the present procedure which the Government have adopted, namely, that this House should have these concession Bills brought before it, is a step in the right direction, and I want to take another step in the right direction and ensure that the House shall have as much information as can possibly be obtained when one of these private Bills for private concessions is laid before it. The very nature of the procedure renders it imperative that such information should be laid before the House. Then those who have objections to make have an opportunity of objecting, and of giving evidence before the select committee which automatically sits on a private Bill. So we have both sides represented, the promoters or their agents giving evidence before the committee, as do also any objectors to the Bill, and the committee then reports to the Chamber. Take the Kingia Grass Tree Bill: if that were a private Bill we should now be in definite possession of the information as to what was intended by the proposed lessee in regard to the basis of the late company, which I take it is a very important point that the Chamber would do well to consider when it deals with the proposition. We should also have more information from the experts available in regard to the extent of country to be covered and the number of trees per acre expected to be won therefrom. We should know whether the claims that this country is a new-found El Dorado, as put forth in the prospectus read by Mr. Allen, have any foundation in fact. We should be in a far better position to deal with this measure than we are now, and furthermore we should have the satisfaction of knowing that this had not cost the State anything, because fees necessary and ample to cover the expenses would have been paid by the promoters. The promoters would be advised before they put up the fees if their proposition was not a very sound one, and this would have the effect of preventing people making frivolous applications for valuable rights. I do not think there can be any objection to my motion. The House will do well to support it. It will facilitate the business and gain automatically the maxi-

mum measure of information for the House when one of these concession Bills is brought before it. I intend to ask that the House shall send the first part of the motion along to another place, and ask for their concurrence therein. The second part need not be sent along to another place, for they have their own Standing Orders dealing with private Bills, with which they may or may not be satisfied. Personally I am not satisfied with our Standing Orders in this respect. I feel sure from the opinions expressed to me by some of the members of another place, that the motion will meet with a cordial reception there, more especially because, as I have already pointed out, it confers on the Government a certain amount of immunity from concession hunters, and also it gives either Chamber an opportunity of viewing this matter from a purely non-party standpoint.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [4.45]:  
I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

On further motion by Hon. W. Kingsmill, paragraph (1) of the resolution transmitted to the Assembly for concurrence.

#### BILL—LOAN, £1,537,000.

*All Stages.*

Received from the Assembly, and on the motions by the Colonial Secretary, read a first and a second time.

*In Committee, etcetera.*

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

Read a third time and *passed*.

#### BILL—APPROPRIATION.

*All Stages.*

Received from the Assembly, and, on motions by the Colonial Secretary, read a first and a second time.

*In Committee.*

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Appropriation of Supplies:

Hon R. J. LYNN: I do not like offering opposition to the Annual Estimates as placed before the House in the Appropriation Bill, but it does appear to me that to have a Loan Bill and an Appropriation Bill passed through this Chamber in a very few minutes without opportunity to members of the Committee to peruse the items, is hardly the correct thing. There are various items in the Estimates, if hon. members care to peruse them, on which the Committee might wish to offer some comment. The Annual Estimates include votes for positions which the Government do not propose to fill. I fully recognise that the Council cannot deal with items on the Estimates and that we are not in a position to amend the votes in any particular. Nevertheless, that these Bills should be put through the Chamber under a suspension of Standing Orders seems to me hardly the correct thing. The Police vote for example makes provision for 11 inspectors. There are only nine inspectors in the force, and, so far as I know, it is not the intention of the Government to appoint any more. One can quite understand that the Estimates are put before the Council only by way of making the necessary provision so that the expenditure may be incurred. On this occasion I echo the protest of Mr. Sanderson against things being done with undue haste here. It appears to me that the Estimates might remain in the hands of this Committee for an hour, if not more, so that members may have an opportunity of perusing the items. My personal opinion is that the House should not pass this Bill, at all events, before a quarter past six, in order that we may have time to know exactly what we are voting on. I know it may be argued that the procedure is merely formal, but I remember occasions when we had in this House Estimates which gave rise to considerable criticism, the debates extending over some time. I remember, too, that protests have been made against dealing with the Appropriation Bill while the Standing Orders were suspended. If it is the pleasure of the House to pass the Appropriation Bill in a few minutes without having perused it, I can only enter my protest against that course.

As far as I am concerned, I have no wish to block them, but I do consider we should not be asked to pass these Estimates without at least some consideration being given to them. There may be certain loan appropriations here which are readjustments in connection with trading accounts. It may be that deficits have been created, and in order to readjust the finances money must be taken out of loan funds; and there is information in certain other directions which it is desirable the House should have. It is not right that at the present juncture we should enter on further ventures of any description, or expend further money while interest is so high as it is to-day without the fullest information. As I have said, it is impossible for members to look through all these matters while the leader of the House rushes through the Bill clause by clause and schedule by schedule, without anybody knowing anything at all about it. For the Committee to assent to that procedure would, in my opinion, be distinctly wrong. I appeal to this House. The Estimates have been printed and sent up here at five minutes notice, laid on the Table of the House, the Standing Orders have been suspended, and this House is asked to pass them. To do so would be distinctly wrong and, so far as I am concerned, I am not prepared to do it. If I am to vote on any clause or any schedule, I want at least to have information on it, and I shall vote against any item of these Estimates until I have received that information.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I should like to bear out the remarks of the hon. Mr. Lynn—

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I should like to remind the hon. member that those remarks should have been made on the second reading.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I conclude I am in order in referring to the matter now that it has been brought forward. Two Bills have been rushed into our hands, and we have been given scarcely time to look at them before one is passed. Glancing through the schedule, I find an item on which I should have liked an opportunity of asking information, but I had not the time. The item I refer to is the development of the goldfields. I find the amount set down for this is only £19,000, whereas for the development of agriculture the sum is £650,250. I should

have liked an opportunity of asking the Colonial Secretary for an explanation on that, but owing to the way in which the Bill was brought forward I had not the opportunity. In the Bill which is now before us the first thing I look at is a mistake. I cannot refer to it now, but I will take an opportunity of doing so at the proper time. I mention this to emphasise the necessity for a little time being given members to look through matters placed before them. Had the Colonial Secretary made a few preliminary remarks, it would have afforded us the time necessary to run roughly through the Estimates, but the Minister apparently took it for granted that the Bill would be carried without study and he made no remarks whatever. It is useless bringing matters of such great importance before us until we have had time to look through them. I support the remarks of Mr. Lynn, and I do not think he is asking too much when he says that we should have time at least to read the Bill before being asked to vote on it.

The CHAIRMAN: The question before the Committee is Clause 2. I do not want in any way to limit discussion, but the second reading of the Bill has just been passed. That was the time when general remarks on the Bill should have been made, and I would point out that the third reading of the Bill is still to come.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The clause provides for an amount of £1,653,413, which represents the total of the schedules. If we pass Clause 2 we will be voting the full amount stated in the schedules.

The CHAIRMAN: Any amendment made in the schedule would be made as a consequential amendment to the clause.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: But the Committee will be put in the position of passing something hurriedly about which they know nothing. If I may accept your advice or ruling, I understand that, even though Clause 2 be passed, when the schedule is reached it will be competent to move the deletion of any item under consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: That is so.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am pleased to have your ruling on the point, but it seems peculiar procedure if, after passing the clause, it will be competent for the Committee to amend the schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not only my ruling, it is the practice in this Chamber.

Hon. J. E. DODD: Looking through the schedule I find the items under the heading "Development of Agriculture," abattoirs, freezing and canning works, Wyndham, £300,000, in the schedule of Appropriation Bill included under the heading "Development of Goldfields."

Clause put and passed.

Schedules A to F—agreed to.

Schedule G—General Loan Fund:

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: We find under the heading "Goldfields Development" such items as abattoirs, cold storage, chilling and canning works, Wyndham, etc.; this is one of those matters to which I should have liked to refer earlier, but I had not the time.

The CHAIRMAN: That is an obvious printer's error, and will be noted as such. The line "Development of Goldfields," where it occurs the second time, should be "Development of Agriculture." That necessary amendment will be noted and reported.

Schedule—put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

### *Third Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East): I move—

*That the Bill be now read a third time.*

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [5.15]: This is the third occasion on which I have sat as a member of this House when the Estimates have been placed before us, and it is the first time that they have been allowed to pass through without members having an opportunity of looking into any of the items.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Why send them to this House at all?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: No wonder the furniture has fallen over in protest against the action of the Colonial Secretary. The Bills which we have passed this afternoon are the most important measures which have come before the Legislative Council. They provide the sinews of war and show the manner in which the money is to be expended, without which all that we do will be futile. Hon. members in this Chamber are elected by the people of the State, particularly and principally to look after this phase of the question.

We in this House represent the actual taxpayers of Western Australia. We do not represent the rank and file as they do in the other Chamber, but those who are called upon to find the sinews of war, to carry on the affairs of the State, and yet a matter of this description is allowed to pass through the Chamber without even being scanned or commented upon. The essential part is that the present Estimates, judging from the cursory glance I have been able to give them, show that the Ministry which was appointed to supersede the Scaddan Government were elected to office for the specific purpose of straightening the finances of the State, and to introduce economies in the direction of assisting towards that straightening, and if necessary to increase taxation for the purpose of meeting the increased expenditure; but the first duty should have been to practice economy and reduce the expenditure of the State. A casual perusal of the Estimates reveals the fact that no such attempt has been made, and in my opinion the Ministry to-day are not entitled to occupy the position they do occupy as trustees of the finances of Western Australia. I am making a formal protest against the action of the Government in not giving us an opportunity to peruse the Estimates. I recognise the difficulties of the Government and the enormous tasks they have undertaken, the difficulties through which Australia is passing in common with the rest of the Empire, and the time of Ministers which was taken up on account of the referendum, but all these things do not excuse the Government of the day for so dealing with the finances, or this Chamber for allowing the Appropriation Bill to be passed without any kind of discussion. I have on this occasion allowed the Bill to go through, but so long as I am a member of this Chamber if any such attempt is made again to deal with the Estimates in the manner that was done to-day, I shall move the adjournment of the debate irrespective of what the consequences may be.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.20]: As a new member of this House although with some experience of another place, I am astounded at the procedure which has been adopted here to-day. I am given to understand that in years gone by the Ap-

propriation Bill has been passed through this House in a few minutes. That is borne out by the fact that the Minister in introducing the measure made no remarks whatever upon it, but I feel that the responsibility rests on the shoulders of members of this House, and our responsibility is as great as that of hon. members of another place. I would be failing in my duty if I did not enter a protest against this method of passing legislation. I would have liked very much to have had an opportunity of criticising in a friendly manner the actions of the Government in connection with the Estimates, and I would have liked to find out whether due economy was being exercised in regard to the affairs of the State before the contemplated taxation was placed upon the shoulders of the people. I understand now that a committee has been formed to go into the taxation proposals, but there will not be any opportunity of amending these Estimates. I know it is beyond our power to make any alterations to the Estimates, and that all we can do is to protest, but I think there are men of mature brains in this House, men of experience at any rate, and I am satisfied that much good would come from the Estimates if they were properly criticised. I would have liked to offer some criticism in regard to the railways of Western Australia. In my opinion, great economies can be effected in this direction. There is a great leakage there and I am denied the opportunity of giving utterance to the views I hold in regard to the administration of that department because as a new member I would not dream of taking up the time of the House unduly, but in years gone by I have been in a position to offer such criticism and it proved of value to the department and to the State. The opportunity is now lost. I do not desire to detain the House unduly. I understand that the Premier is anxious to get away to the Eastern States to-morrow and that his visit there is in the interests of Western Australia, but I cannot help again expressing my extreme disappointment that in this Chamber we have no idea of the finances, either Loan or Consolidated Revenue, and that we have not had an opportunity of criticising the Estimates, and offering to the public and to the Government some sound views in regard to

administration and economies which should be effected in the interests of all.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [5.22]: I also want to enter my protest against the manner in which the business is being dealt with in this House and particularly so when we realise that those gentlemen who are now sitting on the Treasury Bench have in the past very freely criticised the actions of their predecessors in a similar direction. I realise that they are doing their very best in the interests of the State, but it appears now that the present Government having attained office, have done a jolly sight worse than their predecessors. I trust that in the future when Bills of this description are submitted to the House members will have an opportunity of discussing them.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.24]: I cannot allow the opportunity to pass without offering a word of protest against the manner in which the Estimates have been run through. One would imagine from the manner in which the leader of the House introduced this Bill that it was nothing short of a joke. He submitted it without a word of explanation. During the past month the Government have gone to the bad to the extent of £117,000. The Government came into office to work wonders and yet in the face of all that has been going on, and without anything having been attempted in the shape of straightening the finances, the Estimates are brought down in the form of an Appropriation Bill and placed before members of this House without a word of comment. One cannot help but feel that there is something in the atmosphere that is not altogether consoling. Last session the Appropriation Bill was held up day after day and almost week after week by the present leader of the House who offered all sorts of objections, yet to-day he comes forward and attempts to pass the Bill through all its stages without a word of explanation. All I can say is that it does not redound to the credit of this Government to attempt to pass measures through the Chamber in such a manner and I want to place on record my protest against what has been done this afternoon.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [5.25]: I would like to offer the last

speaker this consolation that the session is not yet ended. It is to be adjourned and the real financial issue will be the first thing to come before us early in the new year. The essential part of the financial administration will be the proposals for raising money and on those proposals I assume economy will be initiated to the utmost degree, that responsible Ministers may find practical. The main feature of the financial administration has yet to come before us and then hon. members will be able not only to relieve their own minds but to do justice to responsible Ministers. I think that every hon. member ought to feel that Ministers who have the courage to face the difficulties of administration at the present time deserve the support of all, and I am very glad to see that the ex-Colonial Secretary has set a good example in this respect. He has been prepared right through this short part of the session to wait a reasonable time for Ministers to evolve their policy. Under the existing circumstances the fact that the Premier is leaving the State to-morrow, that the members of another place have sat for over 24 hours and are waiting for this Bill, and that the real issue of the finances will come up early in January, I think that this is the time to maintain our souls in patience and deal with the Government after they have had a fair opportunity of evolving their policy.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [5.29]: I do not wish to say one word by way of advertising the Government, but I recognise that there are exceptional circumstances surrounding the introduction of measures such as this that perhaps to a certain extent cannot be avoided. There is no doubt that with the introduction of all these money Bills there is a certain amount of hurry at times which is a hard thing to avoid. I think this House might have had a little more time in which to consider these Bills. In regard to the Loan Bill there are items in the schedule which I think ought not to be there. I know perfectly well that some of the items may possibly be the result of the transactions of the late Government. I do not deny that. At the same time conditions are altering every day. To have this sum of money which we have on the Loan Bill

at the present time, in connection with votes for railways especially, is to my mind ridiculous. When we have to pay the interest which we shall have to pay we want to be extremely careful what we do. In regard to the other Bill we are considering, I do not know that any one of us has any time whatever to go into the schedules, and the only item that I looked at is the same as Mr. Kirwan looked at, namely, that dealing with the development of the goldfields. In that item I could see there was a mistake. So far as I am concerned, whatever may have been the action of the late Government I shall consider very seriously when the Bills come before us for the consideration of various works, whether we are justified in spending one penny on any fresh agricultural railways for some years to come.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [5.33]: Holding the views I do in reference to this Chamber I consider that the procedure adopted this afternoon is absolutely correct. We are inclined to take ourselves seriously, so far as legislation is concerned. This just shows, boiled down, that we do not do anything of the kind. We have here matters dealing with the finances. I have always understood that finances represented the most important function of the Government. It appears to me that although we represent the electors of the State, and we are here to watch their interests, the fact remains that on the most important question in connection with the government of the country we merely pass something that another Chamber has dealt with, showing definitely that the people of the country quite recognise that they depend on the Legislative Assembly to deal with the most important questions. When I voiced my opinion on first entering this Chamber that this Chamber was unnecessary hon. members dealt with me in a very patronising manner. To my mind this afternoon has furnished additional weighty argument in favour of the opinion I then held. My opinion was that the most important questions were not even placed before us, as Mr. Kirwan has pointed out, in time for us even to read them, let alone consider them, seeing that it is not part of our busi-

ness to do so. If we are supposed to consider this most important business I must say that I do not like to pass a thing without reading it. If people understand that we do not protest in regard to certain items, we would have to admit that we pass them and simply chance them, that we thought they would be all right, that someone else had admitted them, and that we had slummed our work. So long as the Legislative Council does its business in this way it will suit me, and will serve as an additional argument in favour of the opinion I hold that the Legislative Council is unnecessary. If we do not do our work we will go out of existence. If we make a ponderous pretence of doing it people will begin to believe that we are doing something, but the procedure this afternoon is entirely in accordance with my views, and I shall explain to my constituents that on the question of finances this House does not interfere. I shall have to support the third reading of the Bill.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.35]: In justification of the protests which have been raised I need only remind members that this amount of literature was placed upon the Table this afternoon, a few minutes before the Bills were introduced. What is the object of giving us all that information, the Appropriation Bill, the schedules and so on, if it be not intended that we shall have time at any rate to look through them? As I explained to the Committee, the first of the two Bills that were thrown into my hands was the Appropriation Bill, and whilst looking up matters on the Appropriation Bill I found that the Loan Bill had gone through, and that one matter upon which I should have liked some explanation from the Colonial Secretary, I had no opportunity of saying a word upon. There were various other matters which, if I had had time to read the Bill, I should have inquired for further information upon. Now, I should like to know of what use it is to bring forward these Bills to us if we are not supposed to criticise them or to have time even to read them? I take it they are presented to us for the purpose of permitting us to give an intelligent vote and to criticise them, but from the manner in which they were brought forward to-day we certainly have



no such opportunity. A remark has been made by Mr. Millington which certainly ought to be taken to heart by members of this Chamber, quite irrespective of what our views concerning the Chamber may be. We, as individuals, so long as we are members of this Chamber, are entitled to carry out our duties. There are those critics of this Chamber who say that this Chamber is only in existence in order to block reform. Personally I consider there is a great amount of justification for that remark. What has happened to-day will certainly justify those who say that this Chamber has outlived its usefulness. May I be permitted to ask a few questions of the Colonial Secretary which have been prompted by the remark made either by Mr. Allen or Mr. Duffell. The deficit has been increasing and only in to-day's paper we see that the deficit for the month was something over £100,000. I think I am right in saying that for every one of the four months that the present Government have been in office, there has been a very considerable deficit. The sum total of these deficits would come to a great deal, and I would like to ask the Colonial Secretary if he is in a position to inform this Chamber as to whether or not the Government propose to adopt anything in the way of economy of administration. When the Government come before this Chamber or another place and ask for increased taxation, I think they ought to make it plain that the money which they are getting is being properly expended, and I would like to know whether they have taken, or purpose to take, the question of economy of administration into account. There are a great many other questions of the same nature. The other matters which I am sure various members of the Chamber would have liked to have brought forward we had no opportunity of bringing forward. This is a matter which I am sure each and every one of the members of this Chamber would like to know about, namely, is the Colonial Secretary in a position to give definite information on the point as to whether or not these public documents indicate—I cannot say from the hurried glance I have had of them—that the Government propose anything in the nature of economy of administration? I notice in to-day's paper that the expenditure is much greater than

it was for the corresponding month of last year. I think the Colonial Secretary might tell us whether the expenditure is really lessening or increasing.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [5.40]: I am quite willing to agree with Mr. Millington in one respect, that if another place sits for 24 hours or 30 hours, and having become tired in the meantime are anxious to finish their work, we in this Chamber, on account of the consideration that we should give to another place, should immediately pass these Estimates, and be finished and go home. When the Estimates or the Appropriation Bill were on last year Mr. Cullen moved an amendment to the Appropriation Bill. The Estimates and the Appropriation Bill were under discussion for a week and Mr. Cullen moved the deletion of or an amendment to an item respecting the "Kangaroo," I think it was. If the Estimates last year were worthy of seven or eight days' consideration, and amendments could be moved for consideration to be given to them in another place, what has come over the scene that within a few short minutes we can come here and pass the same sort of measures without any consideration at all, and without even the leader of the Opposition indicating in any direction what the expenditure meant or what it was intended for in the future? It was the brushing away of millions of pounds that might almost be like brushing papers off one's table, the moving of clause after clause and schedule after schedule, and then comes the ludicrous part of it, when the Chairman of Committees reports that the House has given consideration to this measure and begs to ask for its final settlement, or death, or anything else, and we are told that the Committee have carefully considered the Bill when they have not read it. I have not had time to carefully peruse all the speeches, or at all events very few of them, relating to the Appropriation Bill of last year. Sufficient is it for me to say that we discussed these Bills and we watched every item. We questioned everything that in any way might affect the expenditure for the future, and refused to give permission unless we were fully satisfied and an assurance was given by the leader of the House as to what many of these items really meant. Let me just

draw members' attention to the fact that the first year I came into this House, four years ago, I knew nothing about Parliamentary procedure. The Labour Government then in power had embarked on many enterprises out of an advance vote to the Treasurer, so we were told at the time by the leader of the House, and assured that the Government were justified in embarking on the building up of these enterprises out of a sum of money that the Treasurer had received for an advance account. We find in Schedule E a vote of £400,000, and this is how it reads—

To be issued if and when required from the public account to enable the Treasurer to make advances to public officers and to other persons, or for payments of deposits on contracts or on account of other governments, etc., also to pay expenses of an unforeseen nature chargeable against the Consolidated Revenue Fund or the General Loan Fund.

Out of that advance vote the then Government embarked upon certain enterprises, and they considered they were justified in the expenditure. We were all very indignant, and one after another we told the Government that they had no right to expend that money. So incensed did the House become that we passed an amendment to the Address-in-reply, protesting against warrants being signed without authorisation. That amendment was duly sent to His Excellency, having been carried against the Government of the day. We now protest that if it was bad for the late Government to have done this, it is equally wrong now. Of course it has always been the custom to do it. When Mr. Drew was leader of the House and we came to an item like "Other undertakings, £114,100," nearly every member said to the then leader, "We are not going to give you a blank cheque like that to be expended probably on some socialistic undertaking." We want your assurance that the State will not be committed to anything in the way of State enterprises before we vote you this amount." Yet in this Schedule E we have the same item. "Other undertakings." Has any hon. member asked the Colonial Secretary what it is for? We had been led to believe

that many of these State enterprises would have been closed before now, yet they have been continued. If "other undertakings" means that any losses in connection with these enterprises are going to be a charge against the State, I will refuse to vote for the Bill without further consideration. It is all very well for Mr. Cullen to support it. This is the first time he has allowed the Estimates to go through without protest. Yet he now says that, on account of the tired feeling of members in another place, we should pass this and send it back. Mr. Cullen also said that economy was not the watch-word. If economy is not the watch-word to-day, what is? Taxation, Mr. Cullen told us. Every hon. member should have been given the fullest opportunity of considering the Bill, so that a comparative table might have been set off against the provision of 12 months ago. Hurriedly looking through it, we find "compassionate allowances," "additional clerical allowances," "honorariums" for this and for that. Yet we are asked to put the whole thing through without further consideration. If the Colonial Secretary intends to reply, I hope he will tell us something of the S.S. "Kangaroo." Some of the debentures have been redeemed, and provision is made for the redemption of £140,000 worth of stock, with a special sinking fund. Seeing that the purchase of this ship gave rise to a lengthy debate in the House, that charges were made respecting that purchase, and that it was stated freely that the ship should not have been purchased, it is reasonable for us to ask what is now the position in regard to her. Does it mean that the redemption of the stock and the special sinking fund are something that has been earned by the ship, or something which Consolidated Revenue has to pay? In the Colonial Secretary's Estimates, we find a vote for inspectors in the service. That vote has never been made use of yet, notwithstanding which it is again on the Estimates. What is it for? Is it not merely to inflate the amount which the department has had at its disposal, or is it intended that the Estimates are not to be taken in a serious manner? I agree that we in this Chamber are not taken seriously when we are treated in this

fashion, and that what we may say here has very little weight at the present time. If necessary, I will vote for the postponement of the second reading in order to offer my protest against the procedure followed. I have never before known the Appropriation Bill to be sent up and hurried through without our having an opportunity of reading it. That is what has been done, yet the Chairman will report that consideration has been given to the Bill. Take the "development of the goldfields and mineral resources," the "development of agriculture," and then take "Railways, £466,000." This schedule is for the services of the year, as detailed in the Estimates of expenditure from Loan Fund. The Colonial Secretary may know all about these items, but I most certainly do not, and the leader of the House has given us no information. I protest against £466,000 being spent out of Loan Fund under existing conditions. I may be quite on the wrong track, but in the absence of information I can only treat the item as it appears to me on the schedule. Is this anything in connection with the continuation of a policy, or is it in order to complete construction of any line? Is it the intention of the Government under existing conditions to buy all this material at the excessive rates prevailing, and in face of the scarcity of tonnage and of labour, and so inflate the cost of these works? Is that an item intended for advances out of the Agricultural Bank, or an item in connection with the wheat scheme? We have no knowledge. It is almost too late to inquire now, seeing that the Bill has gone through Committee in so hurried a fashion.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: 'The hon. member keeps on making references to the "hurried manner" in which this Bill was put through Committee. I do not think he is justified in doing so. I purposely put each clause and each schedule much more slowly than usual. I hope Mr. Lynn will do me the justice of acknowledging that, and of refraining from making references which have almost a personal application to me as Chairman of Committees.'

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am sorry the Chairman of Committees should think I make reflections upon him. I did not think the

inference was there. I can assure him that I have no wish whatever to make any reflection. However, we ought to have some explanation of what this vote "Development of Agriculture" means. I do not know whether the recent picnic on a State farm absorbed any money from this vote. I consider that any member of the House is justified in making a protest against such a measure as this going through without any thought or consideration. We are told, on good authority, that many farms have been abandoned, and are in the hands of the Agricultural Bank for sale. We are told there is little or nothing doing in the Lands Department. Yet on the Estimates there is a large amount for additional clerical assistance. That fact does not appeal to me as indicating a desire on the part of the Government to effect economies. Considering the large number of civil servants who have gone to the Front, the salary votes should be much less this year than they were last year. The additional votes included in the Bill are such as one would like to examine, and compare with the figures of previous years. The same remark applies to the workers' homes vote, compassionate allowances, contingencies, and even to honorariums for good services performed in any direction. I have no desire to stonewall the measure any further. I am stonewalling merely on principle. I desire to protest against a procedure which, in my opinion, is distinctly wrong. Had another party been in power to-day, this Bill would not have got through in so short a space of time. Believing that, as I do, I protest against the action of the party now in power, in putting this Bill through in half an hour, without any consideration, without members having had an opportunity of even perusing the measure.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [6.6]: I would be quite content to let the Bill go to its third reading now; but I must say a few words in reply, lest it might be thought that I was discourteous to hon. members. This lengthy and somewhat unusual third reading debate has come upon me as a surprise of a very refreshing and pleasing nature. I trust that the

comments made by hon. members will receive due attention, not only from members of another place and from the Government, but from the public in general. The attitude I have taken up in regard to the Estimates for years past is that the practice followed, not only in this House, but generally followed, has reduced the Estimates practically to a farce. There have been Governments who were in power for years, who had long recesses in which to prepare Estimates and financial programmes; and yet it has happened over and over again that the Appropriation Bill and the Loan Bill have not reached this Chamber before the closing days of the session. In the present instance, the Government did not come into power until the year covered by these Estimates had been entered upon—in fact, a couple of months of the year had gone. Since that time the Government, for one month, were employed, with other members of this House, and with citizens generally, in the referendum campaign. Practically all the rest of the time has been devoted to urgent Parliamentary business.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Why did not you get a Supply Bill to carry you on?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In the face of those facts, hon. members who have apparently seen nothing wrong in the actions of previous Governments long established in office, Governments who had enjoyed long periods of recess to prepare their Estimates, now expect the present Government to do something that has never been effected in the past. It has been said that when the Appropriation Bill was introduced last year I made certain protests and moved in regard to certain items. I did. But I knew what I wanted. I did not talk about schedules on the third reading. I did not get up in Committee and ask about the schedule of a Loan Bill when an Appropriation Bill was being discussed. There were certain matters of policy in regard to which my action afforded the only means of attack, since those matters were included in the Appropriation Bill. I attacked those matters of policy in the proper place and in the proper way; and it was quite open to hon. members to take the same course, had they wished, this afternoon, except for this fact, that these

Estimates do not express any matters of new policy, and thus hon. members, by not discussing these Estimates, do not forego the privilege of discussing any matter of new policy which the Government intend to introduce. It has been said that in moving the second reading of this Bill I made no speech. Had I embarked on a speech, where should I have stopped? Hon. members have probably read the Premier's speech in introducing the Budget—a model, I think, of condensation and brevity, covering about eight newspaper columns. They have also probably read the speeches delivered by Ministers in another place when introducing their particular Estimates. Had I made a comprehensive second reading speech on this Bill, the very long sitting which our friends in another place hope shortly to complete would have been brief in itself compared with the time that I should have had to occupy. I would ask hon. members to put to themselves this question: what is the chief reason for the great deficit that we have to face in Western Australia to-day? Is it a reason that we can attack on Estimates now? I maintain that it is not. Five years ago, when the last Liberal Government left office, the interest and sinking fund bill of this State amounted to one million sterling. The whole of the loan money borrowed and spent up to that period had been spent economically on revenue producing undertakings, with the result that the whole of the million sterling required annually for interest and sinking fund came out of the profits of those undertakings, over and above working expenses and renewals. Not one penny was taken out of the pockets of the taxpayers for the purpose of meeting interest and sinking fund. What do we find at the present day? As the result of the operations of the last five years, the interest and sinking fund bill has increased by three-quarters of a million sterling, and there has been no corresponding increase in the profits from the undertakings on which the huge sum of money borrowed in the last five years has been spent. The money has been spent extravagantly; much of it has been spent on works which, so far from being reproductive, do not cover their working expenses; and the result is that to-day practically the whole of that addi-

tional three-quarters of a million of interest and sinking fund has to be raised by taxation and has to come out of the pockets of the taxpayers. That is the reason for our deficit. It is the careless and wasteful expenditure of loan money during the past five years that has put Western Australia in its present position; and no amount of consideration of the Estimates on the Consolidated Revenue Account can remove that difficulty.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: What Government was responsible for the Fremantle dock?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As regards the Fremantle dock, I do not remember the exact amount of the loss; but the dock was a mistake and an error which cost the State some £200,000. Any Government in power for a long period of years—or, to be more accurate, any succession of Liberal Governments in power for a long period of years—may be congratulated if they made only one mistake involving the loss of £200,000. If that work is put in with all the others carried out by Liberal Governments, the sum total of their loan expenditure showed this result—that the undertakings paid their working expenses, paid their maintenance, and paid the whole of the interest and sinking fund bill on the money borrowed.

Hon. C. Sommers: Did the Fremantle members support the construction of the dock?

Hon. R. J. Lynn: I did not.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Fremantle members supported the proposal more enthusiastically than anybody else. If I were to start now to tell the tale of the undertakings initiated by the previous Government, in which losses of £200,000 had been made, I should be here until midnight. But I content myself with repeating the general statement, that I can prove by reference to the figures that the addition of three-quarters of a million sterling to the interest and sinking fund bill of this State, which resulted from the five years' administration of the last Government, was made without any corresponding increase in profits to pay interest and sinking fund. The consequence is that the taxpayers of this State are three-quarters of a million per annum worse off than they were before.

Hon. J. M. Drew: You supported nineteen out of twenty of those proposals.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I could take my honourable friend from one proposal to another that I opposed. There was the purchase of the Perth tramways for something more than double their worth. There was the power house, to be built for £160,000, but which will not be completed for much less than three times that amount.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Did the hon. member support the agricultural railways?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, I supported the agricultural railways; and had the previous Government followed the example set by their predecessors and built those agricultural railways on a system by which the Public Works Department competed against private contractors in tendering for the work, those railways would not have cost anything like so much as they have done. As to the Wyndham Freezing Works, had the late Government carried out that proposition by contract, or had they enforced the contract they entered into, we should probably have had those works completed for the £150,000, which was the amount of that contract. But they did not, and now it is found that the works will cost £465,000 sterling. One hon. member has said that when the present Government came into office they were going to work wonders. No member of the present Ministry ever said he thought they were capable of working wonders.

Hon. J. F. Allen: If the leader of the House is referring to me, I deny that I said the members of the present Government were going to work wonders. I said they claimed they were going to practice economy.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I make no reference to the hon. member. The hon. member who said that when we came into office we were going to work wonders was Hon. J. Duffell. He made that statement, for which there is not the shadow of a foundation. I defy him to prove that any member of the present Government said they were going to work wonders. So far as these estimates are concerned, I would remind the House that they were prepared to a large extent by our predecessors. A month of the

financial year had gone by when we came into office. If hon. members are prepared to treat the Government fairly and give us an opportunity of investigating the affairs of the department the Government are quite prepared, if they have that opportunity, to effect economies and to be then judged by the public on the question as to whether they have carried out their promise to effect economies or not. Hon. Mr. Lynn has referred to the fish shops. Let me assure him now that the fish shops will be closed, and let me invite the hon. member's assistance, if he can give it to me, in securing a decent price for the steamer "Una," which has been largely responsible for the losses incurred in the fish supply business. As to the "Kangaroo," I am pleased to be able to tell members that that vessel is "doing very well, thank you" and will prove a profitable proposition. Hon. members will have an opportunity of discussing the Government's taxation proposals when the Bills are before the House. I cannot say anything on the general subject of the finances now, because the proposals of the Government must be dictated to a large extent by the conference to attend which the hon. the Premier is leaving to-morrow for Melbourne.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [6.18]: I move—

*That the House at its rising do adjourn until Tuesday, January 23rd, 1917.*

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 6.19 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 23rd January, 1917.*

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

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Return showing the premises rented by the Government. 2, Annual Reports (a) Fremantle Harbour Trust, (b) Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, (c) Registrar of Friendly Societies, (d) Department of Agriculture, (e) Department of Public Works and Trading Concerns, (f) Perth Observatory. 3, Government Savings Bank, annual balance sheet, report, and returns for the year ending 30th June, 1916. 4, By-laws of the municipalities of (a) Fremantle, (b) Perth, (c) Kalgoorlie, (d) South Perth. 5, Roads Act, 1911. (a) Amendment of Schedule "N" of the Uniform By-laws, (b) By-law of the Road Boards of Collie, Cottesloe Beach, Kalgoorlie, Merredin, Mullewa. 6, Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Department, amendment of by-laws. 7, Health Act, 1911, (a) Amendments to the Food and Drug Regulations, (b) By-laws of the Road Boards of Bayswater, Kookynie, Westonia, (c) by-laws of the Municipal Councils of Perth, Collie. 8, State Sawmills, Auditors' report, balance sheet and profit and loss account to June 30th, 1916. 9, Plant Diseases Act, 1914. Regulations. 10, Abattoirs Act, 1909, Regulations.

#### SELECT COMMITTEE — KINGIA GRASS TREE CONCESSION BILL.

*Report presented.*

Hon. W. KINGSMILL brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the Kingia Grass Tree Concession Bill.

Report received and read, and ordered to be printed.