

Amendment passed; clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 77 to 83—agreed to.

Clause 84—Board of Conciliation :

Hon. J. W. HACKETT : This was new. Was there an appeal ?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : There was no appeal from this board. The assessors had to sign an agreement that they would be bound as by a decision of the court.

Hon. J. W. HACKETT : Must the board be unanimous and was there the right of appeal ?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : There was no right of appeal, but he thought the board must be unanimous. The award was made binding. After the late timber trouble a board of conciliators was appointed to settle a question in connection with an engineers' dispute, and the board was appointed under a similar provision to this.

Question passed.

Clause 85—agreed to.

Clause 86—Unions of Government employees—amended verbally.

Clauses 87 to 96—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments ; report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 21st August, 1907.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m. •

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the *Premier*—1, Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act—Report by Registrar to 31st December, 1906. 2, Public Library of Western Australia—Report for 1906-7.

By the *Minister for Mines* : 1, Papers re inspection of Boilers at Collie—Return ordered on motion by Mr. Scaddan dated 31st July.

GERALD BROWNE CASE, PAPERS.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL, in laying on the table the depositions and papers in connection with the prosecution of Gerald Browne, the depositions on the inquest of Marley, also the correspondence and papers in connection with the Gerald Browne case, said : I desire the leave of the House to say that on looking through the files in reply to a verbal inquiry as to whether the finding of the magistrate that wounding was lawful, covering the consequences of such wounding, I gave an opinion which would be apparent to every member that the magistrate's finding that the wounding was lawful would stand, subject of course to any revision that might be made of such decision by the authorities. I make that statement because, being a purely formal matter it escaped my memory. It is a rule of law, and does not affect the particular merits of the case.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. SPEAKER : I desire to intimate to the House that I have nominated the member for Dundas (Mr. C. A. Hudson) as a temporary Chairman of Committees.

QUESTION—RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVES SOLD.

Mr. BATH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, How many locomotives have been sold since 1900 up to the present date? 2, To whom have they been sold? 3, What was the price paid for each engine? 4, Whether all the locomotives thus disposed of have been paid for. 5, What was the cost of repairing each locomotive? 6, Did the purchasers pay for the repairs, or were the repairs effected by the Railway Department prior to purchase? 7, What was the first cost of the locomotives by the department?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: I must request the hon. member to move for a return. It is impossible to get the information without some delay; but if the hon. member will give notice of a motion I shall endeavour by next Wednesday to have the papers ready.

Mr. Bath gave notice of motion.

QUESTION—EXPERIMENTAL FARM, NANGEENAN.

Mr. BATH asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What changes have recently been made in the managerial control of the Experimental Farm at Nangeenan? 2, What salary is being paid to the present occupant? 3, What length of experience has he had in practical farm work? 4, What are his qualifications for the position?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Mr. Robinson, who was manager, has been appointed Inspecting Manager for all State Farms. Mr. L. A. Solomon has been appointed working foreman, and receives his instructions from the Inspecting Manager. 2, The working foreman's salary is £156 per annum. 3, He has had several years farming experience in the Northam District.

4, He is known to be a practical farmer and is suitable in all other respects for the position he occupies.

QUESTION—RAILWAY PROJECT, CHAPMAN SURVEY.

Mr. T. L. BROWN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it a fact that the surveyor on the Chapman line has received instructions to make a permanent survey of same, commencing from Crowther Junction? 2, If so, who suggested Crowther as a starting point, and why was it adopted? 3, Why were the four routes with their starting points, recommended by Lands Officer Thomson, not considered or looked at by the Survey Department? 4, If not too late will the Minister order an inspection of said routes by professional men?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Suggested by the Senior Engineering Surveyor, after a thorough examination of the country, for the following reasons:—(a.) A line from Crowther is easier of construction and would avoid the steep and difficult grades on the Northampton line; (b.) This junction is most convenient for working from the point of view of the working railways; (c.) The agricultural areas are best opened up by the route suggested. 3, They were considered. 4, Answered by No. 3.

QUESTION—GRANT TO MEMBER RETIRED.

Mr. F. Illingworth.

Mr. FOULKES asked the Premier: 1, Is it proposed to make a financial grant to Mr. Illingworth, and if so, what amount? 2, Will the Colonial Treasurer give the House an opportunity of discussing the question before any amount after this date is paid to Mr. Illingworth?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, £1,000. 2, Yes.

Mr. FOULKES: On that answer I would like to ask, without notice, whether any amount up to now has been paid to Mr. Illingworth?

The PREMIER : A certain amount has been paid.

The PREMIER replied : 1, No. 2, No completed classification has been submitted. 3, At an early date. 4, Yes.

QUESTION—SEWAGE FILTER BEDS, PERTH.

Mr. HARDWICK asked the Minister for Works : 1, Why was the gauge of metal for the Filter Beds in connection with the Perth Deep Drainage scheme altered from 3 inches to 6 inches ? 2, What is the difference in cost between supplying 3-inch and 6-inch metal for such work ? 3, Whether this difference in cost was a direct saving to the State, and if so, what amount ? 4, Whether any further subsidence in the foundations or work has taken place since the date of the City Engineer's report ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied : 1, The 3-inch gauge was adopted as far as practicable as a minimum in order to avoid the insertion of any small stone which would constrict the air space. The stone as supplied is considered to be that most suitable for the purpose. There is less than 10 per cent. of 6-inch stone in the filters. 2, There is no difference in cost between 3-inch, 4-inch, and 6 inch metal as supplied from the quarries, but stone so supplied includes all the fine stone made by the crushers. In the case of the stone for the filters the contractor was put to extra expense in taking out the fine material. 3, There was no direct saving made. 4, Since the date of the City Engineer's report of 25th June, 1907, there has been a subsidence of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (three-quarters of an inch).

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE

CLASSIFICATION, PROFESSIONAL.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier : 1, Has the classification of the Professional Division of the Civil Service been completed by the Public Service Commissioner ? 2, Has a draft or completed classification been submitted for Ministerial consideration ? 3, When will the classification be made public ? 4, Will a copy of the classification be laid on the table of this Chamber ?

MOTION—WATER METERS RENT.

Mr. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco) moved—

That in the opinion of this House the charge of rent for water meters imposed by the Metropolitan Water Works Board is an unnecessary and vexatious tax which presses unduly upon consumers, and particularly upon small householders.

He said: In submitting this motion to the House, I may point out there have been several different methods adopted in levying the charges for water consumption within the radius of Perth and suburbs, by the Perth Waterworks Board. There has been the system of charging a tax or rate on the annual value with a minimum. There has been the system of charging in some instances a tax on area, and there has been a third system of charging a direct tax for consumption, to which has been added a charge for rent of meters used for the purpose of determining that consumption. Of late a policy has been adopted by the Minister controlling the Metropolitan Water Supply of increasing enormously the use of meters. The consequence of this is that, if the practice be continued, practically every consumer will in the course of time I presume be charged, not solely for the consumption of the water he uses when it amounts to more than that proportion his rate entitles him to, but also when it amounts to less than that proportion. In other words there might be the adoption of a policy of charging the consumer for the total quantity he consumes, irrespective of that which he is allowed in respect of the rate he pays. In connection with this matter of meters, the Metropolitan Waterworks Board is going farther than any other water supply board has gone in the Eastern States. The only place where there has been anything like the same percentage of metering consumers is in Adelaide, where there are 60 per cent. of the establishments metered as against 44 per cent. in Perth; but in Adelaide no charge is made for meter

rent. In the other capitals the meters are affixed in factories or establishments where a large number of horses or cattle is kept, such as for instance in dairies, which are naturally very heavy consumers of water. Meters are also fixed in the establishments of any other unduly large consumers; but the ordinary householder, even although the house he is in has a small garden plot attached to it, is not required to pay a meter rent. I do not desire to ask the House to say that the practice of paying for the water consumed is a wrong one. It would be a reasonable thing for the House to express an opinion, either that the charge should be on the actual consumption or the rate, and not on both or either as it suits the department. If we are to adopt the principle of metering and charge on consumption, we should make it apply all round and charge the individual, whether the consumption is smaller or larger than is represented by the payment of one shilling per pound on the annual value of the property he resides on. In any event a special rate for a meter is unfair because it is unequal, and its inequality is such that it presses most heavily on the poorest householder and the smallest consumer. Great merit has been made of the reduction of the price of water from 2s. to 1s. 6d. per thousand gallons; but the practice of metering small tenements and charging a rent for these meters has in a large extent not only counterbalanced the reduction in the price of water, but has increased it greatly above 2s. a thousand gallons in a large number of instances. Tenements of the annual value of less than £20 have been metered in a large number of cases. A return I called for some little time ago, and which was laid on the table of the House, shows that tenements numbering 983, of the annual value of £20 or less, are metered. [*The Minister for Works: What about the percentage?*] I did not call for information as to percentages, nor as to the total number of meters in existence. The only information given was in regard to the number of tenements of the annual value of £20 or under, from £20

to £30 and from £30 to £50 and, in addition, the capital cost for meters placed in private residences. There were 983 persons whose residences are of the annual value of £20 or less on whom meters were imposed, with the accompanying meter charge. If a householder uses only the supply his rate pays for, or less than that supply—or in other words uses only the 20s. worth of water a year for which he pays, about 13,000 gallons—he is charged no less than 50 per cent. increase on the estimated value of the water. I have had cases brought under my notice which show an enormous increase even on that 50 per cent. imposition. I will mention one of these cases which I discovered recently in my own district. In July, 1906, a man living by himself in a small tenement on a small block of land, and having no wife or family, was required, although obviously his requirements of water for domestic purposes must necessarily be small, to pay a meter rent. A meter was installed and in 12 months—that was up to last month—the consumption as shown by that meter was 8,000 gallons. That quantity cost the consumer 30s., of this sum, 10s. representing the meter rent and £1 the rate payable in regard to the premises. The registration of 8,000 gallons represented the full amount of water consumed and represented also a charge of 3s. 9d. per thousand gallons to that particular consumer. There are other cases of the same sort that can be cited, but it is unnecessary to go into them. The present position is that a man with the smallest annual value is paying the highest price for water, while a man with the largest annual value pays proportionately the lowest price. After all, this 10s. meter rent is an administrative charge; it is part of the cost of administration and collection by the Waterworks Board, and should be charged as such. While it is charged as rent the large consumer and the small consumer alike have to pay the same amount, which does not at all represent a proportion of the amount of the value they get in the water they receive and utilise from the Waterworks Board. I

contend that if we are going to have this meter system—and we must recognise that the interest on cost of meters and sinking fund will have to be provided, and we must also recognise that maintenance will have to be provided by the consumer—if it be decided that this system of metering and charging according to water actually consumed is to be maintained, it would be much better to have a small increase in the price of water as a direct charge rather than retain the present system of charging the individual with the meter rent. It is simply absurd for a practice to continue to exist which places the holder of a small tenement such as the one I have just referred to, where about 8,000 gallons of water were used per annum, in the position of having to pay a meter rent of 10s. unless every house in the whole metropolitan and suburban district is to be metered. If that were done, it would be far better to make the charge for meters as an administrative one, a part of the cost of supplying the water. If that were done it would probably amount to an increase all round in the cost of water of from one penny to twopence. I have not been able from a perusal of the report of the Waterworks Board to arrive at the actual increase that the remission of the meter rent would represent in the charge for water, but at all events it would mean an increase of not more than between one penny and twopence. In other words the result would be that the individual, instead of paying the present price of 1s. 6d. a thousand gallons, would have to pay 1s. 7d. or 1s. 8d. a thousand gallons. This would be very different from the case I stated, where an unfortunate occupier had to pay at the rate of 3s. 9d. per thousand gallons for water. Under the system I suggest, every person would pay an equal proportion according to the amount of water he consumed. I contend it is the small householder who is the person who should receive special consideration. We want to encourage the beautifying of homes by the establishment of gardens and their maintenance during the summer season. It is in the interests of the community gener-

ally that as many of these little beauty spots shall be provided around the metropolitan area during the summer as possible, therefore we should make the charge on those less able to pay for water as low as possible, so long as the necessary cost of administration and supply were met. If the Minister chose to change his policy by slightly increasing the price of water to counterbalance the abolition of meter rents, I am quite certain the general community would be more thoroughly satisfied than they are at present. It is a matter of small importance to the large consumer whether the small consumer gets the advantage of this abolition of the meter rent or not for the increased cost to him would not in any case be serious. At the present time a man who occupies a house worth £100 or £200 per annum pays exactly the same meter rent as a man occupying a house not worth more than £10, £15, or £20 per annum. The question of annual value is not considered at all in defining the meter charges and I urge it would be far better, if it be necessary to make a charge at all, to do away with the charge of metering and include the cost of maintenance and of meters in the charge for water. I submit that argument to the House as a justification for the motion I have moved. I have no desire to embarrass the administration of this department by this motion, but I desire to induce the Minister to adopt some more fair, equitable, and advantageous system of making the charges than is at the present time in vogue.

Mr. J. BREBBER (North Perth): I entirely agree with the action of the member for Subiaco in moving this motion, and would draw attention to the fact that on several occasions members of this House and deputations representing ratepayers in the metropolitan area have brought the subject before the Minister for Works, asking for his serious consideration, but without avail. I therefore think the member for Subiaco has taken the right course in bringing the subject before the House. I maintain there is no necessity in any shape for the imposition of meter rents on the people of the

metropolitan area; because the fact has been demonstrated that fully two-thirds of the water supplied in Perth and suburbs does not pass through meters at all. If that water were paid for at scale rates, the water service of Perth and suburbs would yield to the board an income of 1s. to 1s. 6d. per thousand gallons; yet we find on reference to the board's figures that the actual return received by the board is a little over 6d. a thousand gallons. To be fair, the Metropolitan Waterworks Board should take from its capital account a sum sufficient to put meters into every consumer's premises in the metropolitan area. If that were done, a substantial sum, sufficient to cover interest and sinking fund on the necessary outlay for meters would be earned from the extra amount charged for as passing through meters. I have no fear that there would be any deficiency on the capital cost for meters, but rather a substantial profit; because at present, with the water rate at 1s. 6d. a thousand gallons, the nett return to the board is only 6d. or 7d. a thousand gallons, for the simple reason that two-thirds of the water supplied does not pass through meters and consequently is not paid for. That state of affairs ought to be changed, and if it were changed by a general installation of meters as suggested, there would be no necessity for charging rent of meters, because the increased revenue would more than cover the expense of putting in meters, both sinking fund and capital cost. The present charge for meters is unjust, because as the mover has pointed out, the impost bears equally on the small as on the large consumer, so that the man who uses perhaps 10,000 gallons a month pays no more in meter rent than the man who uses only 100 or 200 gallons a month. The rate is therefore unfair, inasmuch as it weighs too heavily on the small users. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): On this question I am in a somewhat peculiar position, because personally I find myself a good deal in sympathy with the views expressed by the mover and the member for North Perth.

[Mr. Johnson: Then support the motion and we will carry it.] But to some extent I am the inheritor of a policy and a position which has practically been settled by my predecessor. I do not want it to be inferred that I think he could have adopted any other course than that which was adopted, because the water supply of Perth is at present and has been for some considerable time in a peculiar position, for we know that we are almost up to the limit of supply, under present conditions. Efforts are being made to increase our supply temporarily for the next year or two, pending the initiation and completion of a larger scheme; but in the meantime we must, so far as the Waterworks Board is concerned, use every endeavour to prevent waste. That was the position my predecessor had to face. He found a supply which, if carefully used, would be sufficient for Perth for some few years, he found farther that a great amount of waste was going on, and he entered into a contract for the supply of several thousands of meters, intending to largely increase the metering of Perth. [Mr. Taylor: And introduced a new style of meter.] Yes; a better meter than previously used. [Mr. Taylor: The rate-payers do not say so.] If the hon. member cares to inquire from engineers connected with the department, he will soon be able to satisfy himself that the positive meters at present used are for registering purposes far preferable to inferential meters. I know that in defending the use of a gas meter, or electric light meter, or water meter, it is a difficult task; but situated as the Perth water supply is at present, it is absolutely necessary for some two or three or possibly four years to have a complete system of metering for preventing waste. Practically concurrently with the decision to initiate a more complete metering, a drop was made in the price for excess water. I thus found myself in this position, that while a large capital expenditure had been entered upon shortly before I came into office, at the same time there had been a reduction in price to consumers. If meter rents are to be abandoned—and let me say the capital

involved in meters is £23,541—there is only one possible method of meeting the difficulty, that is by increasing the price of water. It would mean that an increase of 3d. per thousand gallons would have to be charged on all water supplied and consumed by the general rateable consumer—leaving out of consideration public bodies, parks, and supplies of that character; the general consumer would have to pay 3d. per thousand gallons more for water to make up the deficiency in revenue. Up to the 30th June, 1906, there was some 3,503 meters fixed in the metropolitan area, representing a total of 10,147 services, or 34½ per cent. of the total services.

Mr. A. J. Wilson: What percentage of consumers now pay meter charges?

The MINISTER: I will give you that presently. A year later there were 5,100 meters, with 11,429 services, or 44½ per cent. The result was satisfactory, because I think it will be admitted on all hands that last year we had a long dry summer, a season particularly trying to the Water Supply Department; but we got through it without serious difficulty, and were able to keep up a supply as well as in previous years. The result of metering was that we accounted for 51,000,000 gallons of water which previously we were unable to account for. I know the figures are disputed by some engineers. It is stated that 300,000,000 gallons of water in connection with the Perth Water Supply are not accounted for. It was with the object of endeavouring to account for this large amount of waste water that my predecessor was induced to go into this policy of metering. The member for Subiaco would lead the House to infer (not intentionally I admit) that to charge for a meter is a most extraordinary procedure; but though in Adelaide, the only other capital city which has a comprehensive system of metering, no charge is made, yet in all the other States and in most of the large cities of England it is customary to charge a rent for meters. [*Member:* Yes; where they meter only a few.] In Melbourne, for instance, 20 per cent. of services are metered as against 34½ in Perth at the end of June 1906, and

rent for meters is charged. The 20 per cent. metered in Melbourne represents much more than those fixed to dairies, stables, and market gardens. This important fact has to be remembered, that when there is a plentiful supply to meet the demand, there is not much need to worry about a little waste; but where the available supply is not any too large, the consideration of waste comes in at once. I venture to say that in the metering of the services, the board has metered only those services where there was reason to believe that water was being used largely in excess of the requirements of the property. [*Member:* Nonsense.] It is all very well to say "nonsense." Members will, I hope, recollect that scores of complaints come in in connection with the water administration—I shall be glad to show them to members, or to put them on the table if desired—and in nine cases out of ten it is shown the consumer himself is at fault. It is a most unpopular supply; water services always are, as everybody seems to believe that the meter registers half as much again as it ought to do. [*Mr. A. J. Wilson:* That is true often.] I venture to say it is not true. At all events, if a meter does register more than it ought, a very simple method of settling the matter has been devised by the department. The meter may be taken out and checked, and if found correct the consumer pays the cost of testing; if it is found wrong, the department pays. [*Mr. A. J. Wilson:* But a lot of guarantee is required.] That is a simple matter, and it is very frequently done. [*Mr. Wilson:* Most cumbersome.] I know what I am talking about on this subject, and I say there is no difficulty about the making of tests, if a man knows he is right; but most people do not like the probability of its being shown that their ideas as to the amount of water inaccurately registered are erroneous.

Mr. Bath: Wait till you get notice as a consumer; then you will agree that it is a most cumbersome method.

Mr. A. J. Wilson: When a meter is to be tested, you make no allowance for the extra water registered.

The MINISTER: Certainly we do. I am constantly authorising such allowances: and if a meter is proved to be wrong, a rebate is made on the basis of registration from the previous reading. For instance, if in the beginning of June a person has reason to think his meter is registering inaccurately, and when he gets his reading at the first of July he gets his meter tested, if it is shown to be inaccurate, whatever percentage may be shown to be inaccurate is taken off the previous quarter's reading. I have made many of these allowances: it is not at all unusual to make that rectification. If, as an hon. member says, only five per cent. was allowed, it was because the meter was shown to be wrong to the extent of five per cent. It has been constantly said that the rents charged for these meters have been unreasonable and unfair, but as far as I can ascertain the rents charged by the Metropolitan Waterworks Board have been, if anything, considerably lower than rents charged by other water supplies.

Mr. Scaddan: What is the average life of a meter?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not like to say offhand, but I have known meters to be working 10 years, while I know others that have given out within three or four years. We charge $8\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on cost: in Sydney the charge is about 10 per cent on cost, and in Melbourne 12 per cent. For half-inch meters we charge 10s., whereas in Leeds it is 12s., and in Halifax 12s., while in Wigan, a town very much the same size as Perth, the charge is 10 per cent. on cost. When we get down to $8\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. as we do, it no more than covers the financial charges and cost of upkeep in connection with meters. One thing has struck me as a most extraordinary proceeding in connection with the agitation concerning meters. It is, that many local bodies running electric light services and charging rent for meters registering light have the audacity to object to a charge for meters that register water. It would be interesting to ascertain what charges are made by these local bodies for rents of meters for registering light. The member for

Subiaco is the Mayor of Subiaco, and I have not the slightest doubt we will hear that the Subiaco lighting plant—

Mr. Daglish: Do you take these municipalities as a guide?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not; but I think that if the mayor of one of these municipalities—and a model one at that as the member for Forrest suggests—finds this charge for meters by the Government such an iniquitous proceeding, before moving a motion in this House it was up to him to explain to his own councillors what an iniquity they were perpetrating, and to advise them that they should remove this charge. One municipality charges 60 per cent. on the cost of meters. In no case does the charge get as low as $8\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. Of course it is easy in a matter of this sort to squeeze the Government. The Government is looked upon as fair game to knock anything out of: but I venture to think that if the Metropolitan Water Supply was a private concern there would not be the slightest hesitation in paying these charges. However, I ask members to recollect that shortly we have to initiate a larger scheme. I had hopes that the Inquiry Board's report would have been ready three or four weeks back, but I am assured now that it is within a few weeks of completion. As soon as that report is ready the Government will come down with some complete scheme for a water supply for Perth, possibly for the metropolitan area; and I say the present is an inopportune time to in any way decrease the revenue of the board. I frankly admit that in some cases the incidence of this meter rent is unfair and unreasonable, but I have yet to learn of any charge that does not in some way bear heavily on some people. We have been obliged to enter into this more complete system of metering in view of the fact that in a year or two we shall only have enough water to supply the reasonable requirements of the city by exercising careful economy. Face to face with that position we must persist in this increased meterage. Then we have the other fact to consider, that a reduction of sixpence per thousand gal-

lons has been made in the case of excess water. It would be most difficult to replace that charge, or any portion of it at the present time. The better method I venture to think, if members will allow me, is to leave the question over until the bigger question of the supply of the whole metropolitan area is settled. [Mr. Johnson : That is in five years' time.] There is one other matter that deserves consideration. The Metropolitan Water Supply is not the only water scheme under the control of the Government; we also have the Goldfields Water Supply, the Fremantle Water Supply—[Mr. Angwin : Which pays you well]—the Claremont Water Supply, and the Broome Water Supply. In all of these meters are used, and the capital at present involved in the use of meters in the Government Water Supply Department is close on £50,000. We must be logical in our dealings with the public in whatever part of the State we are working. If it be determined in the Metropolitan Water Supply to do away with the meter charge, it would be only fair to do away with it in other services. The member for North Perth offered the suggestion that every supply should be metered, and that the charge for water should be made by meter. There is something in that, but I made a calculation offhand, and I think it would cost at least £30,000 to carry it out; and just at present I think it is inopportune to go in for such a large expenditure. I appeal to the House to take into consideration the exceptional circumstances of the Perth Water Supply, the possibility of initiating a new scheme in the very near future, and for the time being to leave this matter at rest.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) : I desire to say a few words in support of the motion. I was Minister for Works at one time, and I seriously contemplated abolishing meter rents absolutely. I came to the conclusion that we charged meter rents simply to gain a certain amount of revenue. There is no other argument advanced by the department or by the Minister to-day for charging rent for meters. There is con-

tinual opposition to the meter rent, largely due to the fact outlined by the member for Subiaco, that the small consumer is the man mostly penalised. If he uses only a small amount over his allowance the price is considerably more to him than to the man who uses a large amount, because the same charge for rent for the meter is made to the large consumer as to the small; consequently it is an absolutely unjust tax. [Mr. Ware : Prices varied for different sized meters.] I believe there was a slight alteration made; I believe I made the alteration in that regard, but I was still of opinion that we could go farther, and at the end of the financial year it was my intention to abolish the meter rent charges altogether.

The Minister for Works : Did you leave that on record?

Mr. JOHNSON : I am going to explain that. We could not abolish them at the end of the financial year, but it was my intention to make an announcement that at the end of a given term the meter rents would be abolished, but that in the meantime there would be no reduction in the price of water, and that it was hoped by the increased population an increased consumption would bring in increased revenue. In the past we have been reducing the price of water as increased consumption took place year after year. I intended, not to decrease the price of water, but at a given time to abolish the meter rent, and by an increased consumption to make up the revenue, consequently gaining the revenue from the water instead of from the meters as we do to-day. I contend it could be done; I do not say straight off; but if the Minister makes up his mind to do it say in twelve months' time, it is quite possible there will be an election in the meantime and he may not have to do it; I believe he would not have to do it; but he could make the announcement, and that would get over the agitation. Increased consumption of water would compensate for the loss of the meter rents. I believe the motion can safely be carried as a protest against an unjust method of raising revenue, not

only in the metropolitan area, but in other districts of the State.

Mr. W. C. ANGWIN (East Fremantle) : I move an amendment :—

That the words "imposed by the Metropolitan Waterworks Board" be struck out.

We realise, as the mover said, that with the Minister controlling the water supply throughout the State it is a case of "heads I win, tails you lose." We know that every possible point is scored by the Minister, that he holds up his end of the stick. In Fremantle, though the scheme according to the latest return shows a profit of over £3,000 per annum after paying interest and sinking fund, consumers have not only to pay meter rents but to pay special rates if their houses happen to be on the outskirts. And though the Government can charge on the ratable value whether or not water is supplied, they wish also to charge, after putting in meters, for the smallest excess consumed if that excess exceeds the amount charged on the ratable value. The amendment will make the motion cover every water supply district in the State; it will put all districts on an equality in respect of the charge for meters; consequently I have every hope that the amendment will be passed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory) : As the amendment if passed will involve a considerably greater loss of revenue than the motion, I was about to ask that the debate be adjourned. The amendment will make the motion a much larger order, and farther information will be necessary as to the amount of the loss to be sustained. If members wish to discuss the question now I am quite willing; otherwise I shall have to move the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) : The Minister for Works, in charge of the water supply branch, has I think given the House all the information which in his opinion is necessary on the original motion. I recognise that the amendment will considerably widen the

area of the motion, taking in the whole Government water supply of the State. I feel sure, however, that no better case can be made out for any other Government water supply than has been made by the Minister for the Metropolitan Water Supply, and I feel sure the House will pass the motion as proposed to be amended. The amendment enables members to speak on the question of water supply generally. Dealing first with the metropolitan water supply I wish to say that for the last few years at least I have found dissatisfaction in every quarter. People are dissatisfied with the meters. Not only do they object to the meter rents, but they find the meters are inaccurate. Consumers are charged for water they do not use, and they are not so simple as to fail to perceive that when they practically shut down their taps and use rain water, using only a very small quantity from the pipes, the meters register a large consumption. Before I sit down I shall speak of a case which came under my own observation, and which I know to be absolutely correct. [Mr. A. J. Wilson: Meters are very erratic.] Undoubtedly they are. I know consumers who have used the water for gardens, and the meters did not register anything like the consumption registered by the meter of the man with no garden, who used water for household purposes only.

Mr. Bath: My meter registered more when all my household were at Kalgoorlie than when we were at Subiaco. It registered 16,000 gallons for April and May, and only 8,000 for January, February and March, when I was living in the house.

Mr. TAYLOR: That is the position, a position which obtains in many portions of the metropolitan area. I hope the House will consider the necessity of charging the people for the water and not charging meter rent. As others have pointed out, the rent does not press so heavily on the very large consumer; but a small consumer who uses an excess of 1,000 or 5,000 gallons has to pay 10s. for meter rent and 1s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons for the excess water. That is a

serious charge which is not felt so severely by a consumer of 100,000 gallons. Cases have been brought under my notice in Leederville, where I live, of people who have used little or no water being compelled to pay for £3 or £4 worth of water in the year. [*Mr. Daglish*: There are similar cases throughout the metropolitan area.] I have been told of one case in which the occupants only slept in the house, went to business in the morning, had their meals in the city, returned at night, and used practically no water except for making tea in the morning and for bathing and washing; and an account for something like £3 was sent in for excess water. I did not secure the whole of the facts in writing, but I was told of them on the best authority, and I believe the statement after comparing it with other statements which are so familiar to those who live in that portion of the metropolitan area. It would be much better if the charge for meter rents were discontinued and the water used charged for. Then people would know exactly what they were doing. If they used water they would know what they had to pay for it; if they did not, they would know there was nothing to pay. Now they have to pay the meter rent in either case, whether or not they use the water to which they are entitled. Notwithstanding the Minister's statement that the meters are accurate, I wish to say that the new or "positive" meter is inaccurate. I know that of my own knowledge. Perhaps that is one reason why the Government have substituted them for the old meters in the metropolitan area. In reference to the Goldfields Water Scheme I wish to point out that on the fields to-day there are people paying not only 10s. a year for meter rent but much more. I saw this in Coolgardie, and I believe the custom obtains in Kalgoorlie, though I am not sure. The department put a galvanized iron cover over the meter, and locked the cover so that the meter could not be touched except by the proper officer. By some stretch of imagination the consumer was charged 10s. for that cover, and meter rent in addition. The mem-

ber for Coolgardie (Mr. Eddy) will recollect similar complaints. Several Coolgardie people are now paying for covers on their meters, as well as for meter rent -- just as much for the cover as for the meter; and the departmental reply to a remonstrance was the department believed that the meter had been tampered with, and had locked it up to protect it from the thief. I say that is unfair. The department who put in the meter ought to protect it just as a shopkeeper protects his scales. I say it is unfair to charge meter rent, and it is doubly unfair to charge another 10s. because the department provide the meter with a locked galvanized iron cover to prevent fraud. I do not think even the Minister will tolerate that charge. If it is possible for a skilful engineer to tamper with a meter, it ought to be possible for the engineers of the Works Department to frustrate the culprit without an additional charge of 10s. for covering the meter.

The Minister for Works: If we find a wire inserted in the meter, we cannot prove who put it there. It is there, and has probably been put there by the consumer. What are we to do?

Mr. TAYLOR: It is for the Minister to say why this has been done. The matter was brought under my notice some five or six months ago in Coolgardie. One man who complained said he cultivated an excellent garden without using much water; and I think the authorities assumed that as other people using larger quantities of water had gardens which did not look so well, he had been tampering with his meter so as to produce a better result than his neighbours. But the result was easily accounted for. He, though using a smaller quantity of water, knew all about gardening, and adopted dry mulching; and though he did not put a drop of water on his garden for about two months during mid-summer, it was still green. I do not think there can be brought against the Metropolitan Water Works Board any charge of a more heinous character than that I have just mentioned in respect of the Coolgardie

Water Supply Branch. I am confident that anyone who has lived in the metropolitan area will readily admit the dissatisfaction that exists because of the meter rents and the new type of meter. It is not satisfactory to the people; it is not a fair and just meter. I do not want to bring up anything of a personal character but I know of my own knowledge that it is most unsatisfactory. I hope the motion will be carried.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (on amendment): I want to reply to one or two observations that have been made in reference to the type of meter now used. We have tested this meter by putting in a master meter over about a dozen in one street, and we have found the meters extremely accurate. We have carried out independent tests by passing so much water through the meter into a receptacle of which we knew the capacity, and we found the meters to be accurate both in connection with the multiplicity of tests in the first case, also in the single tests. I can also inform members whilst we have considerably over 5,000 meters fixed, all our tests come to about three per week.

Mr. Taylor: People have to pay for the tests.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We also test a considerable number of meters on the report of the meter-reader. The Government want to deal honestly and fairly with this matter. We do not wish to make the consumer pay for more water than he consumes. The class of meter used is also in use in many of the largest water supplies in the old country. It is in use in South Africa and in South America. I do not know if it is in use in some of the other Australian cities. All our tests have had one result, they have shown this meter to be an accurate and reliable instrument for measuring the water. I do not say that it does not occasionally go wrong. We have had cases where there has been considerable over-registration, and we have had cases where there has been under-registration.

Mr. Taylor: The under-registrations are not brought under your notice.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Any mechanical appliance is liable at times to go wrong; that must be admitted. If a man pleases he can test his own meter; I have done it myself. If you find a meter is wrong, you can tell just as well as the Water Supply Department, and you can call the department in to make a test, and if it is shown that the meter is inaccurate the Water Supply Department have to pay; it costs the consumer nothing at all. Every opportunity is given to the general public to make the tests, in spite of what the hon. member for Forrest may say.

Mr. A. J. Wilson: Cannot you have the test right on the spot?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If you can get an empty tank of a given size on the spot, you can make the test.

Mr. Taylor: A meter may register the hundreds all right, but when it goes on to the thousands there is a possibility of jumping from 1,000 to, say, 5,000.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is an extremely unlikely thing to happen with the positive meter. We had a case some time ago where a man tampered with the tens of thousands and thousands. There was no doubt that he did do it, but the hands on the hundreds of thousands registered correctly all the time, and he forgot that. It showed such a little difference that he did not notice it, and that was how we detected it.

Mr. Collier: But you lost the case.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No costs were given against us in that case. We have had no end of trouble with water meters, especially on the fields where they are using a different positive meter. It is possible there for the meter to be tampered with; but I do not suppose members wish me to explain in the House how it is done.

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Scaddan: These laundries use a lot of water.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is possible for a water meter to be tampered with, and if there are certain indications that a meter has been improperly used and improperly treated, we have covered the meter up and we have charged the person with the cost of cover-

ing the meter. I defend that action on the part of the Government.

Mr. Scaddan : Only in case where a meter has been tampered with has a cover been put on ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : It is impossible to go into details because I should be giving information to the public which it is not desirable to give. We have had indisputable evidence that meters have been tampered with, and we know the person who will benefit by the meter being tampered with ; therefore we should take all business precautions. If I have a positive meter on my premises and when the meter reader comes round to read and clean and repair it, he sees certain indications that it has been tampered with, he knows there is only one person who will be benefited by the tampering, that is myself. He cannot prove I did it. Someone may have done it to cast a slur on my character for the purpose of getting me into trouble ; but in 99 cases out of every hundred it is the consumer himself ; but we cannot prove it, and in such cases we cover the meter and make the consumer pay for the cover. There may be one case in a hundred where the person is unjustly treated. I wish to deal with the case referred to by the member for East Fremantle (*Mr. Angwin*). We have cases not only in Fremantle but in Perth where there are a few houses at a considerable distance from the existing main the owners of which desire water.

Mr. Angwin : This is about two chains.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : If the member will bring to me any case where persons have been unfairly treated, I can assure him the matter will be remedied. I say in every case where the supply to the consumer will show a reasonable return by rates on the cost of the main, the water will be supplied to them. Where there are a limited number of consumers who desire to have a supply of water, but the cost of the laying down of the pipe will not be covered, or the rating does not pay a reasonable interest on the cost, we say frequently that if those persons like to pay a little more on the ordinary rate for a few years we will put down the pipe.

Mr. H. Brown : What has that to do with the charge for meters ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : A remark has been made and I am entitled to answer it. It is invariably reckoned that the main extension should at least pay about 10 per cent. on the cost and on the extra charge of laying down the main. I think members understand that if they pass this motion as it stands they will be passing it in the dark without full and accurate knowledge of the state of affairs.

Mr. Collier : A full knowledge of the justice of the case, though.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : A thing may be sometimes just, but not expedient. No wrong has been done anyone, but it would be better if we devised some means where a slightly increased price could be charged for water instead of having a water meter rate. But at the present time we have to guard every avenue of revenue, especially with the Goldfields Water Supply and the Metropolitan Waterworks Board scheme. I hope members will recognise that. The carrying of the motion will put the Minister in an awkward position, when we wish to deal fairly in this matter.

Mr. Stuart : What do you suggest ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : That the motion should be allowed to lapse or that members should vote against it ; anything to get it out of the road until the more complete scheme for the water supply of the metropolitan area is before the House.

Mr. H. BROWN (Perth) : I trust the mover of the motion will push it to a division. There is no necessity to adjourn it now. It has been pointed out to the Minister for Works on more than one occasion that if metres were fixed in all cases but not charged for the revenue would be increased more than one-half. We have heard about the registration of meters this evening and I would like the Minister for Works to produce the books of the meter tests for the last few years, and I can assure members of the House that while I was a member of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board—(*The Minister for Works* : When you used a

different meter]—nearly every meter tested registered 10 per cent. to 25 per cent. more water than the consumer was using. In addition, I have advocated repeatedly that it would be far cheaper for the Government to make every consumer in the city have a meter and give it him free ; because during my term on the Waterworks Board for every thousand gallons of water brought into Perth from the reservoir we only received payment for 500 gallons. That shows conclusively that if every one paid for the quantity of water used the State would be far better off. There would be no necessity during the summer months to have the huge cost which is entailed by pumping in that beastly water we get from the bores. We could practically draw the water for the greater part of the year from the Canning reservoir and the consumption would not be so great from the bores, if any at all was required. We could obtain fresh water nearly all the time from the Canning reservoir. Members who are suffering from the effects of this iniquitous tax should force this motion to a division this evening.

Mr. W. T. EDDY (Coolgardie) : I rise to support the motion. I believe the charge for water is unfair and unreasonable. Members from the goldfields can tell members of this House—I can at any rate—that on the fields there are any number of empty houses, and the owners not only have to pay the water rate but the meter rent. That has been going on for the last two or three years. I am sure in Coolgardie alone there are many empty houses where the landlords have to pay the water rate and meter rent. In my own case in Coolgardie I have to pay 12s. 6d. a year for meter rent, and I asked the reason and was told that they had to put in a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch meter because they were short of $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch ones. I made an application for a reduction some two years ago, and that is the end of it, for I am still paying 12s. 6d. I think the tax is unfair and more than vexatious, for, as the member for Subiaco put it, it bears very harshly on the small consumers. The charge for meters should be abolished altogether, for it is not right

that those persons who use very small quantities should have to pay just the same as those who are large consumers. If householders were allowed to buy the meters they would jump at the opportunity, for they fully realise the very large percentage of the cost that they now have to pay annually. The Minister hinted that it is only fair some rent should be charged. None of us object to pay a fair rent : but what I do object to, on behalf of the goldfields people, is to paying for the rent of a meter which is never used at all. I hope the amendment will be passed, as it will stir up the department and make them give the matter careful consideration.

Mr. J. C. G. FOULKES (Claremont) : I have listened with great interest to the speech of the member for Coolgardie who deals with the question as it affects the goldfields. I should like to hear an explanation from the Minister as to how our revenue would be affected if no charge was made for meters. [*The Minister for Works* : I have given the amount.] Not the amount as regards the goldfields water consumption. The member for Coolgardie dealt with the question as it affected the fields, and I should like to know from the Minister if he can tell us what the abolition of the charge on meters would mean on the goldfields.

The Minister for Works : The total cost of the goldfields meters was about £28,000, and you can take about eight or nine per cent. on that.

Mr. FOULKES : We have been told that if these charges are abolished the sum should be made up in other directions. So far as the motion tabled by the member for Subiaco is concerned there is great sympathy felt by every member in the House. I have more sympathy with the people of the metropolitan and suburban districts than with those on the goldfields. In the former case the people have to pay sufficient for the water to prevent the Government from suffering any loss whatever. The people in the metropolitan, suburban, and Fremantle districts pay their full charges for water, and the people of the

State do not lose a single penny by reason of the fact that the Government of the day are supplying these districts with water. With regard to the goldfields, however, a different state of affairs exists. That supply is not paid for by the people. The Goldfields Water Supply Administration pays a certain sum as dividend, but I believe it has not paid sinking fund for the last two or three years. This amendment should not be rushed through the House. It has been put suddenly by the member for East Fremantle, and we are now asked to deal with the question without full consideration and to dispose of it in a rapid manner. The debate should be adjourned. The farther consideration of the motion and amendment might easily wait for a few more days. [Mr. Walker : It would then be shelved.] I will take good care it is not. The member for Subiaco knows that there is considerable sympathy on both sides of the House with the motion, and I do not think he is very anxious for the question to be rushed through in a comparatively empty House. [Mr. Collier : It has been on the Notice Paper.] I know it has been, but there is a comparatively empty House now. [Mr. Collier : Members should attend to their duties.] It is a most important matter and I hope that the House will agree to the debate being adjourned for a few days. I have just consulted the member for Subiaco and he informs me he has no objection to the adjournment of the debate on this question.

Mr. H. DAGLISH (on amendment) : I do not intend to oppose the amendment moved by the member for East Fremantle, and I do not see any objection to an adjournment of the debate for a week. I think the House is quite able to see that the matter shall come up again for discussion, at no distant date. It is only reasonable that the Government should be allowed to make any farther representations in regard to the amendment, seeing that it was not given notice of, and therefore there was no possibility of their presenting a case as regards it. It is a reasonable contention that the

debate should be adjourned, and I am quite satisfied we shall reach the motion at an early date. At the same time I desire to say I am speaking as one supporting the amendment of the member for East Fremantle, for I recognise that either the principle is right to regard the meter rent as separate altogether from the charge for water or the principle is wrong. If we insist that the principle is wrong in the metropolitan area we cannot say it is not wrong in the goldfields area. We cannot make this a question of geographical character instead of one of principle. At the same time I cannot see the difficulties of the Government. I recognise that the cost of administration must be paid by the consumers of the water, and therefore if a small increase be necessary temporarily in the cost of water per thousand gallons in order to make up the amount lost by the meter rent, that position must be faced by the consumer. The meter rent is unfair in its incidence, and that it is unfair is the ground of my attack. The unfairness applies equally as well elsewhere as in the metropolitan radius, and the power to increase the charges so as to realise the gross sum lost by the abolition of the meter rent will equally remain in the hands of the Government as to the goldfields as well as in Perth. Therefore I do not see that the amendment presents any difficulties that do not occur by the original motion, and I cannot detect what difficulties exist in either. It is significant that in regard to the question of the incorrectness of meters the administration took up altogether a different position from what they did in regard to meter rents. If the meter be incorrect the person who suffers from that is not charged with the test, but if it be correct then the consumer is charged for having it tested. The Metropolitan Waterworks Board sent around officers who report that as the result of inspection they have decided that certain premises should be metered. In other words they say to the occupiers "You are using in our opinion more water than you are entitled to, and you must be

mulcted in meter rent." If the occupier turns out to be using very much less than he is entitled to he is still charged with a meter rent. Why should not the principle of charging a person who is wrong with a meter be applied when a meter is insisted upon?

The Minister for Works: The fixing of a meter makes an occupier careful. Where he has been wasting water before he does not do so afterwards.

Mr. DAGLISH: Consumers frequently complain that it is an incorrect system for the board to make the meter tests, for they are not satisfied that, considering the position the board occupies, the errors will always be rectified. If an impartial test were made householders would make much more use of the provision which enables them to ask for a test. I know of cases where it was absolutely impossible for the consumers to have used the quantity of water their meters registered. I do not say that the majority of meters register wrongly, but a fair proportion of them do so. I know of cases where meters registered a greater consumption in winter than in summer, where they registered more when people were using tank water than when they were relying solely on the supply from the Waterworks Board, and I have known householders who had no garden and small families and had no use whatever for water outside of ordinary domestic purposes, charged with a far higher consumption by the meter than persons who were liberally using water in their gardens. I am referring to cases now with which I was closely connected and with regard to which I have been in the position to gauge approximately what quantity of water was being used, and I am convinced that in some of these instances there have been mistakes in the registration by the meter. I hope the Government will not resist this motion with its amendment. If it does so I hope the House will not listen to the appeal of the Government. I reiterate that the carrying of the motion does not necessarily mean any loss of revenue but merely a change in the method of raising it.

At 6.15, *the Speaker* left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. W. J. BUTCHER (Gascoyne): I move:—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	17
Noes	..	..	..	13

Majority against 1

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Barnett	Mr. Angwin
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Bath
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Daglish	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Davies	Mr. Collier
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Gull	Mr. Holman
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Horan
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Johnson
Mr. N. J. Moore	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Piesse	Mr. Stuart
Mr. Price	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Smith	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Stone	Mr. Walker
Mr. Varyard	Mr. Ware
Mr. Gordon (Teller).	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. Troy (Teller).

Motion thus negatived; debate continued.

Mr. A. J. WILSON (Forrest): Personally I do not think the Minister for Works has made out a case for continuing the system of charging meter rent which has for years past caused so much trouble and annoyance to many people, especially in the metropolitan area.

Point of Order.

Mr. Walker: I have to ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether any farther discussion can proceed after the mover of the motion (Mr. Daglish) spoke in reply before the tea adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: The mover, as he had a right to do, spoke to the amendment. If the amendment becomes a substantive motion, the mover will have a right of reply on the main question. The question now is that the words proposed to be struck out stand part of the question. That is what the mover was speaking to before the adjournment.

Mr. Walker: The mover of a motion, when he rises to speak a second

time, rises to make his final speech in reply ; otherwise the mover could make half a-dozen speeches, and we should never know which one was his reply.

Mr. Speaker : Standing Order 120 is as follows :—

“ A reply shall be allowed to a member who has made a substantive motion to the House, or moved the second reading of a Bill, but not to any member who has moved an order of the day (not being the second reading of a Bill), an amendment, or instruction to a committee.”

If the amendment is not passed, the motion then stands as printed, and the mover has the right to reply.

Debate.

Mr. A. J. WILSON : If the hon. member (Mr. Walker) has no more legal difficulties to raise, I will proceed. I am deeply grateful to the member for Subiaco for tabling this motion, because I have thus become aware of what I did not know previously—that people who have had to submit to receiving water through meters which are somewhat erratic, and register larger quantities than are consumed, have an opportunity of recovering from the department the amounts they have been charged owing to the inaccuracy of the meters. It appears to me the very existence of a meter in connection with the scheme is due to the administration. The meter is utilised for the purpose of giving to the department a check on under or over-consumption, and is primarily placed there for the convenience and protection of the department against any undue waste or extravagance on the part of the consumer. By the imposition of meters the department are not only protecting themselves but in a measure they are protecting other consumers who may not be using a greater quantity of water than they are entitled to under the general rate struck. If, therefore, the meter acts as a check not only for the department but for every consumer, preventing them having to pay for people who use more water than they are entitled to, it seems to me to provide an argument that the whole meter charge should be made a

general charge on the whole of the consumers. It does not necessarily follow, though it seems to be so deduced by the Minister, that the abolishing of the charge of 10s. per annum would necessarily mean taking away that amount of revenue from the department ; there may be other ways in which the amount so lost may be recouped to the department. Even should the department hesitate to impose an increased charge, it does not increase the charge on the general taxpayer ; it only means that there will be a more equitable distribution of the amount taken out of the pockets of the people. The abolition of rent charges, so far as I can see, will have no other effect than that. If I have heard the Minister of Works correctly, he said the Government had something like £53,000 capital invested in meters and that the rent was $8\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. The revenue from meters would therefore be £1,900 a year. If the aggregate is such a small amount, surely that amount spread over the whole of the consumers of the metropolitan area would be infinitesimal and would not be so irksome or so objectionable if paid in the form of a general rate instead of a specific and special tax on forty odd per cent. of the consumers of the metropolitan area. And if it would apply to the metropolitan area, it would apply with equal force to all centres utilising water. There can be no reason why the charge for the same service should not be made a general charge for the whole system, and if the department find it necessary for their convenience to put a meter on certain premises, let them do it, but make the charge on the whole system. At present the private consumer has no option. If the department wish him to have a meter he must have it and pay the rent, there is no escape. Notwithstanding that year by year the meter may indicate that one is consuming 5,000 or even 10,000 gallons less than he is entitled to by the payment of the general rate, the department will still insist on levying on him this additional tax of 10s. per year for the right of providing employment for someone to come along

and read the meter. I think the time has arrived when in the interests of the general body of the consumers the Government might easily forego this rent charge and recompense any deficiency by adding to the general rate for consumption. There would be no loss of revenue and at the same time the irksomeness and noxiousness of the present charge would be removed. I hope the Minister will consider the advisability of giving some definite promise. We know that if the motion is carried it does not mean any special obligation on the part of the Minister to carry out the wishes of the House. It may cast a moral obligation on him, but he may not necessarily do so. However, I hope the Minister when he deals with the larger scheme he has in view will give us an opportunity of dealing with the matter on lines which will give greater satisfaction to the consumers in the metropolitan area who are customers of the Government in the matter of water supply.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): The object of suggesting an adjournment of the debate was to obtain information in regard to what it would actually cost the country if meters were done away with. The Minister for Works has already intimated that so far as the Metropolitan Water Supply is concerned it would amount to something like £2,300, but possibly, so far as the whole of the Government water services are concerned, it may amount to £10,000. [*Mr. Walker*: Not so much as that.] The Minister has no figures here to enable him to make a computation of what it really would cost. Adding a penny to the cost of the water, as suggested, would probably more than compensate for the amount involved; but it is only reasonable that the Minister should be in a position to tell the House what the cost will be, and with that end in view an adjournment was sought. There are many faults with these meters. The Minister has stated that he has given consideration to the question. He has already stated that although the inferential meter is all right when water is

cheap, still the positive meter is more correct. I understand that an inferential meter does not register when the tap is turned on and the water runs slowly, and—I am not giving away State secrets—that it is only when there is a decent head of water that it registers with any degree of success. In fact I was informed during the tea adjournment that after the water is cut off the inferential meter registers. So apparently it has its advantages. However, the only reason why we desire an adjournment is to ascertain the total loss to the State.

Several Members: Question!

The Minister for Mines: I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	20

Majority for .. 1

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Barnett	Mr. Angwin
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Bath
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Davies	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Collier
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Duglish
Mr. Gull	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Holman
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Horan
Mr. Male	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. N. J. Moore	Mr. Stuart
Mr. S. F. Moore	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Piesse	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Price	Mr. Walker
Mr. Smith	Mr. Ware
Mr. Stone	Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. Verryard	Mr. Troy (<i>Teller</i>).
Mr. Gordon (<i>Teller</i>).	

Motion thus passed, debate adjourned.

MOTION — WICKEPIN RAILWAY ROUTES.

Mr. W. J. BUTCHER (*Gascoyne*) moved—

That in the opinion of this House a special board should be appointed to investigate and report on the most suitable route, etc., that could be adopted for the construction of an agricultural spur line to assist the farmers of the Wickepin Agricultural Area, in accordance with the petition presented by the hon. member for Williams.

He said: At first I thought of amending

the motion by adding after "area" the words "and district," with the object of affording a larger scope for discussion; but on looking into the matter I found that to do so would be inconsistent, and I therefore decided to submit the motion in its present form. In dealing with this subject it will be necessary first to give, as it were, a slight history of the agitation for a railway which led up to this petition. About three years ago the Wickepin farmers realised the necessity for a railway, or thought they had; and they urged that necessity on the Government, naturally desiring Cuballing as a starting point. Later on the Narrogin farmers, and those interested in another portion of the Wickepin Area, joined in this agitation; and they stated that a thickly populated district such as theirs was certainly entitled to some small measure of consideration. As a natural consequence the battle as to the starting point commenced; and the Narrogin people desiring the starting point to be Narrogin, there was immediately a split in the camp. The Wickepin farmers decided to form a league—I think this was during the regime of the Daglish Government, and the present member for Guildford was then Acting Premier. When the league was formed they waited on that gentleman, laid their grievances before him, and asked that an independent board of inquiry should be appointed to go into the question of route, obtain information and take evidence on the question, and upon that evidence and information decide the route of the railway. The Acting Premier definitely promised that that board would be appointed. The members of the league, thoroughly satisfied with the Minister's promise, did nothing farther, quietly awaiting the appointment of the board. The next thing they heard of the matter was that a permanent survey was being made from Narrogin. The league again approached the Government. [*The Premier*: How long after was that?] I cannot give exact dates. Complaint was made to the Government that no attention had been given to the Wickepin farmers' application for a

board of inquiry, and that nothing was done towards fulfilling the promise of the Minister in this regard. No. 1 survey was made, as I have stated, from Narrogin, and went out in an easterly direction a distance of about eight miles. At that point it was found impossible to go farther with the survey, because the grades met were altogether too great to permit of anything like a decent line being constructed. The survey party consequently returned to the starting point and began a fresh survey, striking out almost at a right angle from the Great Southern Railway into the southern and eastern portions of the Wickepin district. By this time the league, which was composed principally of farmers in the northern portion of the district known as the Wickepin Agricultural Area, saw conclusively they were not from their point of view getting a fair deal, and so decided to wait upon the present Premier; and they chose as the time for such interview the occasion of that Minister's intended visit to the National show at Narrogin. Owing, however, to an unfortunate accident with a vehicle, the Premier (being injured) was unable to attend the show and consequently had not the opportunity of hearing these people's claims. The Honorary Minister sitting in the Council (Hon. C. A. Piesse) represented the Ministry on that occasion at Narrogin, and received the deputation. Mr. Piesse promised on behalf of the Government that within eight days a reply would be sent to the effect that a board would be appointed to make inquiries as to the best route for the railway. Up to the present time such reply has not been sent.

The Premier: Did you say they asked for a board, at that deputation?

Mr. BUTCHER: At that deputation the Honorary Minister promised that a board would be appointed, and effect given to their original request within eight days; but up to the present no reply has been given. At this point the league, thinking it likely they would be left, decided to petition Parliament. With what result? They got up a petition (which has already been pre-

sented to the House), and they handed it to the member for the district (Mr. Cowcher), pressing him then to present it as soon as possible. In reply, I understand that the member informed them that the petition had to be looked through by the Clerk of Parliament before it could be presented; hence the delay. Probably the member for Williams was unaware at that time that a counter-petition was being drawn up. He may, or may not, have been aware of the fact, but such was the case. The counter-petition was also handed to him for presentation; and, strange to say, this counter-petition apparently did not require to be thoroughly looked through before presentation, as it was presented to the House within six hours from the moment he received it. If there was necessity for the one petition to be looked through by the Clerk of the House, surely there was the same necessity in the case of the other. This only goes to show that apparently the league has not had that attention which presumably it deserves. No. 2 petition, which was presented subsequently, was signed by one man for at least eight members of his family, and in several instances one man signed for three, others for four, others for five or six different people—some of them, I am informed, Narrogin residents with no interest in either route. A similar charge. I understand, has been made against the signatories to the first petition; but what truth there is in that statement I am not in a position to say. The Government will probably tell the House that the promise given to the league was carried out because they sent a departmental officer, a Mr. Stoddart, whom I believe to be a trustworthy officer, to inquire into this matter of the route. But I am informed that he went out from Narrogin and inspected the route to the south of that district—[Mr. Taylor: South of Narrogin?]-and the Wickepin farmers were not informed that the officer was to visit the district, nor that he was to make inquiries about the proposed route; in fact, it was not until his return from the in-

spection that a few of them had an opportunity of meeting him. So at least I am informed. That statement may be right or wrong, but I give it to the House as I received it. I would like to point out that these petitioners do not claim preference for any particular route, and this seems to me to be a point in their favour. They say simply that the route decided on is not in the best interests of the Wickepin Agricultural Area. Their claim may be right or wrong—all I desire is that the promise given by the Government should be carried out. Members may be satisfied that the Minister before making that promise in the first instance must have considered that on the evidence brought before him there was some justification for the request for a board. That being so, it is only fair that the promise should be carried out. There were no fewer than 166 names on this petition, the signatories holding in the aggregate 117,750 acres of agricultural land; they have ringbarked 48,935 acres, have actually cleared 19,470 acres, and have under crop 10,997 acres. [Member: How far are they from the nearest railway?] They may be any distance away from that; I cannot say; but I repeat that the Minister made a definite promise that a board should be appointed to make the inquiries, and he must have been satisfied that the claims for a board were good. It is only right to the people of that district that the promise made should be given effect to. These settlers were induced to take up land in the first instance, I have been given to understand, on the promise that a railway would be built, or that they would be served by a railway.

Mr. Taylor: How long since is it that the settlement of the Wickepin area has taken place?

Mr. BUTCHER: That I am not prepared to say; it is a fairly old settlement I think. I would like to read to the House, for the benefit of members, a couple of letters which I have here, written by the then Honorary Minister (Mr. C. A. Piesse) in connection with the matter, and I will allow members to judge from these letters whether they

consider the Government are called on to redeem the promise made to the people.

Mr. Taylor: The present Honorary Minister?

Mr. BUTCHER: The member for Guildford, then Premier, representing the Government of Western Australia, promised a deputation and the members of the agricultural area that a board should be formed to inquire into the advisability or otherwise of building the railway. This promise was afterwards confirmed by the then Honorary Minister of the present Government, and the letters of that gentleman I will read to the House. Here is a letter addressed to Mr. Reynolds, of Cuballing, and it says:—

“I am indeed annoyed to find that the Government have not fulfilled the promise I made the deputation at Narrogin Show, and have written Perth concerning the matter, asking that my pledge be at once redeemed. I am very sorry for the delay, but it is no fault of mine. I reported fully the next morning in Perth, and quite expected the subject would receive prompt attention. Anyway I trust there will be no more delay. Your deputation made out a case that no self-respecting Government could pass by, and the inquiry should have been held within the time I promised. I have sent your letter on to the Premier with my remarks thereon.”

That was written on the 18th January, 1907, signed by C. A. Piesse, then Honorary Minister in the present Government. He again wrote on the 15th July as follows:—

“I am in receipt of your letters of the 2nd and 8th respectively, the latter covering copy of petition to Parliament, as sent to the member for the district, Mr. G. S. F. Cowcher. Without in any way committing myself to any particular route, I feel at perfect liberty to state that your petition will demand at the hands of Parliament a more searching inquiry into the matter than was given last year. I still consider that the promise I made on behalf of the Premier at the Narrogin Show is still unfulfilled, and your

petition should at least help to have my promise carried out, as I intended it should be at the time of making it. It seemed to me at the time absolutely necessary in the interests of both Narrogin and Cuballing that a more full inquiry should be made, and I promised it. How this promise was fulfilled is common knowledge, and I am not satisfied with it. I take it that your committee will loyally agree to abide by the decision of the board you ask for, if it should be granted (as I trust it may), even if it is adverse to your wishes. I truly hope the matter will, in the interests of both districts concerned, be soon set at rest.”

This letter is signed by Mr. Piesse. These letters go to show that a promise was made and the Government recognised that it was a promise. The Government are in duty bound to do something towards seeing that this promise is redeemed.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): I second the motion.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): The hon. member has given accurately the history of what occurred in connection with the proposed line, as far as he can speak from the information supplied to him; but I must say in many respects I consider he has been misinformed. I have been looking through the file while the member has been reading the last letter by the Honorary Minister, and I have a copy of his letter to the then Acting Premier (Mr. Wilson) after Mr. Piesse returned from Narrogin Show, in which he asked that an inquiry should be made, but he makes no stipulation as to a report of any kind. Mr. Stoddart made an inspection of that line. Mr. Stoddart is second in command to Mr. Muir, who is the head of the Engineering Survey Branch, and I do not suppose there is a man in Western Australia with longer experience than Mr. Stoddart.

Mr. Johnson: He is a subordinate officer all the same.

The PREMIER: He is one who fills Mr. Muir's position when that

officer is absent, and he has had a large experience. He surveyed most of the big railways in the old days. He surveyed the Murchison railway, having six survey parties under him; ever since then he has been in the employment of the Works Department.

Mr. Taylor: Did he travel over the Cuballing line?

The PREMIER: Yes. In addition to this, 18 months ago I went over the line myself, accompanied by the Surveyor General; that was in February of last year, and as a result of that tour of inspection the Government brought out their proposals in regard to railway construction, and I included the Narrogin-Wickepin railway in the policy speech in May of last year, and nothing was heard from these people. This line has always been spoken of as the Narrogin-Wickepin line, but there has been no protest from the settlers. I had an opportunity of meeting many of the settlers in that area, and during my visit it was generally recognised that the line would of necessity start from Narrogin.

Mr. Johnson: Did you state that you made the announcement during your trip through that district?

The PREMIER: I made the announcement in the policy speech of May last year.

Mr. Johnson: Why did you undertake the trip then?

The PREMIER: I undertook the trip in February of last year during the regime of the Rason Government, in my capacity as Minister for Lands, with the object of making myself acquainted with the settlement which was going on in the various districts east of the Great Southern Railway. It was the intention of the then Government to do all they possibly could in the way of railway extension.

Mr. Foulkes: That was before you made the announcement?

The PREMIER: In connection with the lines mentioned at Bunbury, I only made the announcement after being satisfied that we would be justified in going on with the lines, and the whole of these railways were included in the

loan schedule of the Bill which we passed in this House last year. There was an amount provided for the construction of the Narrogin-Wickepin line, and if I am not mistaken the total amount of mileage was included in the loan schedule on the 27th of November, 1906; that was after Mr. Piesse returned from Narrogin. Instructions were given by the Minister to send an officer to inquire into the relative merits of the Narrogin-Wickepin and Cuballing lines. The Bill for the Narrogin-Wickepin line had then been printed, but as a result of the difference of opinion between these people, it was held over so as to give an opportunity for Mr. Stoddart to inspect. Mr. Stoddart made his inspection, and for the information of members I will read what he had to say as a result of his tour of inspection. The instructions given to Mr. Stoddart were:—

“To inquire into the relative merits of a light railway from (a) Narrogin to Wickepin, (b) Cuballing to Wickepin; the terminus being the same in both cases. The information desired is (a) Settlement and number of holders within 10 miles deviation either side of central routes, and number of resident settlers; (b) Cultivation within same limits; (c) Area available for settlement within same limits.”

Mr. Stoddart proceeded to Cuballing and his report is as follows:—

I have inspected the country through which a railway would pass between Cuballing and the terminus which should be common in case of the junction being at either Narrogin or Cuballing. Although similar grades might be obtained from Cuballing eastwards to those of the line surveyed from Narrogin, the country immediately to the east of Cuballing, and within 15 miles of the existing railway, is considerably inferior to the correspondingly situated country east of Narrogin. At present we can get (on the survey from Narrogin to tap the Wickepin Area) 1 in 80 grades against the loads, and 1 in 60 on return journey to Narrogin, similar to the line already being constructed to Collie. Whereas, by using the main line for the coal traffic from Narrogin to Cuballing, and thence to goldfields, as suggested by deputation referred to hereunder, besides lengthening the line some six or seven

miles, we have some long 1 in 60 grades to contend with against the load. Another possibly less important objection to this course is that there is no existing water supply at Cuballing, whereas there is an existent supply at Narrogin. With regard to the point raised by the Cuballing deputation which waited upon the Honorary Minister, Mr. C. A. Piesse, on the occasion of the National Show at Narrogin, that there would be a difference of 15 miles extra freightage to Cuballing by way of line as surveyed compared with a direct route from Cuballing; the difference in distance to the proposed terminus from the two places is not more than two miles by scale. So that, as far as local mileage is concerned, there would be very little difference in freightage. However, the through distance would be increased by the distance from Narrogin to Cuballing, viz., nine miles, and this rate is a differential one, the only difference to the farmer, say in grain, would be 4d. per ton, assuming of course, he is railing his goods to Fremantle. With Albany, however, his port of export, the small difference would be in his favour. But in either case the additional or reduced freight is a consideration which could hardly be taken as a forcible one. The difference in local rates as charged by the Railway Department is—assuming distance to terminus from Cuballing to be 28 miles and to Narrogin 30 miles—3d. per ton or a total difference to the farmer of 7d. per ton, or slightly under a penny per bag of wheat sent to Fremantle, but the ports of Albany and Bunbury will in all probability be important factors to be considered, the distance from Narrogin to Albany being 178 as against 174 to Fremantle, and to Bunbury 181 miles. With respect to the arguments advanced by the deputation representing the Cuballing starting point, Mr. Paulet, chairman of the roads board, stated that the line as being now surveyed would not tap the Wickepin area at all. With regard to this I may say that about two-thirds of the Wickepin area is within 15 miles of the existing Great Southern Railway, and the bulk of this two-thirds portion is within 15 miles radius of the line being surveyed from Narrogin. The balance, viz., the other remaining one-third, will also be within the 15 miles radius of the line being surveyed. A line from Cuballing, with the same objective as the line from Narrogin, would practically accommodate the same country, but the objection of the location of such a line is as I have herein mentioned. It is desirable to have practically the same objective as that proposed from Narrogin, from the fact that there is a large extent of country to the South, South-East, and East to be brought within the accommodating influence of the railway. The country I refer to is now being subdivided by three contract survey

parties of the Lands Department, and which will not be submitted for selection until surveyed. It is most important that this country should be tapped, and consequently, any other objective than that already proposed, if to the South, would still farther intensify the objection of the Cuballing party, and if to the North, would militate considerably against the interests of the lands already taken up, and also that to be taken up, and now being subdivided by the surveyors mentioned. Apart from engineering questions, it is evident that the line giving the best facilities to the greatest number is one which would leave the main line at right angles, and take a direct course to its end. The route advocated by Mr. McBurnie, a large holder, is opposed to the principle of accommodation to the greatest area of country suitable to agriculture, which principle would be lost sight of entirely by a line which in its diagonal course would be too long in getting outside the limit of accommodation afforded by the existing Great Southern Railway. The statistical figures given in connection with the Narrogin-Wickepin line would practically apply to a route from Cuballing, there being no appreciable difference on that head, viz., with regard to country under crop, land alienated, and land available for selection. There are more individual large holdings within the neighbourhood of a Cuballing route, viz., McBurnie 5,000 acres, Waldeck and Trott about 500 acres, and Fleay about 5,000 acres. The line that Mr. McBurnie would appear to advocate is along a route ridden over by Mr. Moody some years ago in connection with an examination of the country through which a proposed line via Cuballing to the goldfields might be obtained. This line has apparently been dotted on the Lands Department lithos, and runs in a North-Easterly direction into, or in close proximity to Mr. McBurnie's land, but would not satisfy the requirements generally of what is expected of agricultural spur railways. From the foregoing I would recommend therefore that the route which has been located from Narrogin be adhered to. By plan herewith the difference in length of line from Cuballing is shown as four miles shorter than that from Narrogin. However, the latter line is surveyed and that from Cuballing laid down merely from rough inspection. The length of a surveyed route from Cuballing might possibly reduce this difference to that sealed and previously referred to, viz., two miles.

His argument is that there is a difference of only two miles between the two lines that have been surveyed. In the face of that recommendation, and in view of the information obtained previously, Cabinet came to the conclusion that the line as

already permanently surveyed should be adopted, and accordingly the Cuballing people were notified to that effect. I think the same gentleman, Mr. Reynolds, was written to on January 31st, and that letter reads:—

“ In reply to your letter of the 28th ultimo and the request preferred by the deputation which waited on the Hon. C. A. Piesse at the Narrogin Show on the 27th November, viz., that a survey and examination of the proposed Cuballing route to Wickopin should be made, I have the honour to inform you that as the outcome of the deputation referred to, the Bill providing for the construction of the railway was dropped during last session of Parliament, and the Hon. Minister for Works was requested to arrange for an experienced officer to be sent down in order that he might make an examination of the rival routes with a view to obtaining an absolutely unbiassed opinion. Mr. Stoddart, the officer so appointed, after making a very careful examination, reported at length in favour of the line, as permanently surveyed, namely from Narrogin. After having given the matter very careful consideration, it was decided at the last meeting of Cabinet that the line to be constructed should follow the present surveyed route, as above stated, from Narrogin. Whilst regretting, therefore, that the wishes of your league cannot be acceded to by the Government, I feel sure that the members will realise that the decision finally arrived at has been reached only after most mature deliberation by the Government, with the strongest recommendations before them from the responsible departmental officers.”

In view of that, what other conclusion could the Government have come to? I have had a close knowledge of that country for many years, having selected the whole for the W.A. Land Company some 20 years ago, and I knew it when there was but one selection there. In February last I went through the country with the idea of seeing what had been done in the way of agricultural development.

[*Mr. Johnson*: You inspected it along the roads.] I know every portion of the country and I was glad to see when inspecting it in February last what had been done, more especially in the neighbourhood of the Jewish settlement, where excellent work had resulted from the operations of those people who had only been settled there for a very short time. I was accompanied on that occasion by Mr. Harper, the Surveyor General, and the then Director of Agriculture (Mr. Chaplin.) One of the great points in deciding this route was the question of where the junction should be made. All who have a knowledge of railway working know that it is preferable to restrict the number of junctions as far as possible. Now by adopting the route which was decided upon by the Government a great advantage existed through there being a junction at Narrogin, which would also be the junction of the Collie-Narrogin line. The one junction would therefore command the two propositions and it is preferable to have one junction to suit two or more proposals rather than to have adjoining stations each of which forms a junction. [*Mr. Taylor*: That is a very weak point.] It is a point which is taken very great cognisance of by anyone having a knowledge of working railways. [*Mr. Johnson*: You penalise the settlers in order to prevent the necessity of having the extra junction.] I would like to know how it can be suggested that any settlers will be penalised. I have had a map prepared showing exactly the country which would be served by the construction of either line. There is a common terminus and the only question is one of junctioning with the Great Southern Railway. As far as the land being served is concerned, one line has very little advantage over the other, and we must therefore be guided by the engineers as to the best grades and the cheapest line to construct.

Hon. F. H. Piesse: Is there not another point to be taken into consideration—the question of the future extension of the line to the goldfields? That was first thought of when it was originally decided to construct a line from Collie to Narrogin.

The PREMIER : That is a point in support of the present route.

Mr. Bath : Who will take up that wild-cat proposition.

Hon. F. H. Piesse : There is nothing of the wild-cat about it.

The PREMIER : When the firewood cuts out on the eastern goldfields they will only be too glad to connect with the Great Southern Railway. Ten years ago there was a proposal of this character suggested, and Mr. Moody rode right across from the Great Southern Railway to Kellerberrin on the goldfields line. A portion of the country was reserved for three or four years in connection with that proposal, and apparently therefore, in those days it was not looked upon as a wild-cat proposition. I asked the officers of the department to consider the question of the line under discussion and Mr. Paterson, the Surveyor General and Mr. Muir were requested by me to hold a conference. One took place and the question was discussed. Mr. Paterson as manager of the Agricultural Bank had knowledge of the district and a number of his clients were there, therefore he was *au fait* with all the conditions of the settlement. The Surveyor General had a thorough knowledge of the district ; but unfortunately Mr. Muir was unable to be present, and the surveyor who had made the original report attended in his place. The three gentlemen referred to went into the whole question and reported as follows :—

“After careful consideration of the engineer's report on the proposed routes of a railway extending eastward from either Narrogin or Cuballing, and our personal knowledge of the districts that will be traversed by the suggested railway, we are unanimously of opinion that Narrogin is the better point for departure, and that the proposed railway should follow the route as surveyed and shown in red on the attached plan. The alternative route leaving Cuballing would practically serve the same amount of land from an agricultural point of view as the Narrogin one. We, however, advocate the Narrogin route for the following reasons :—Firstly, that it would be

a continuation of the Collie-Narrogin railway and is graded similarly with the object of future connection with the Eastern railway with a view to future probable traffic in coal for the goldfields. Secondly, if the Cuballing route were adopted considerable lengths of 1 in 60 grades against the load between Narrogin and Cuballing would have to be negotiated, which would considerably militate against profitable and economical work from the railways point of view, especially if the coal traffic to the goldfields is developed. Another argument in favour of the surveyed route is that it would be shorter to the extent of about six miles from Collie towards the goldfields.”

In the face of the opinions of these various officers hon. members must come to the conclusion that, so far as this particular railway is concerned, every possible inquiry has been made. I do not think it would have been possible to obtain any farther information of any sort or description. The hon. member who moved the motion stated that the names on the petition were duplicated and that the petition he presented contained names which appeared on the second petition, and *vice versa*. We all know that it is a very simple matter to get petitions signed so long as there is nothing to pay. I think that is the case in this petition. [Mr. Horan : Both are chock full of forgeries.] I have not had an opportunity to go into the names, but I am informed by the Minister for Works that there are numerous duplications. I think it will be found that the great point on which the hon. member relies, that is that the promise of the Minister should be carried out, was carried out, and that the deputationists had a reply within two months. The Minister said he could give a reply in eight days ; but I do not know how he could expect that to be done. Of course it did not follow that there would be an officer available. I do not wish to weary members by going into the whole of the details here ; but I have the case as it was presented to the Minister by both sides. There were two deputations waited upon him, one from Narrogin and

the other from Cuballing, and the Minister promised that a farther report would be presented. I have no record that any board was promised, and there is no file in the department which shows such promise to have been given. In the letter sent to the Minister with regard to the question, a board was not asked for, but only that farther inquiry should be made by an officer of the department. That promise was redeemed and you have the report of Mr. Stoddart backed up as it is afterwards by the opinions of the Manager of the Agricultural Bank, the Surveyor General and the Engineer for Surveys. In view of the fact that every inquiry has been made I do not think it would be advisable still farther to complicate the issue by having a board appointed.

Mr. Stuart: If a special board were appointed, who would probably be the members?

The PREMIER: I can only say the board appointed to inquire into the Jandakot-Armadale line consisted of the Engineer-in-Chief, the Surveyor General, and the Commissioner of Railways. A previous board which considered the Coolgardie-Norseman route, in the time of the Daglish Government, consisted of the State Mining Engineer, a representative of the Traffic Branch, and the Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. A. C. GULL (Swan): Though as a rule I am glad to welcome any additional information that can be gathered before the House commits itself to either one route or another for a proposed railway, I must from my own experience decide to vote against this motion. Unfortunately, no sooner do we decide to build a railway than we have the same old battle of the routes. I was for many years a resident of the district in question, and claim a fairly intimate knowledge of the country; and I claim also that so long as ten or twelve years ago, before the people were seized of the agricultural possibilities of Western Australia, a line from Collie to Narrogin and from Narrogin to a junction with the goldfields line was considered, apart altogether from the agricultural possibilities

of the country, and as the best means of ultimately carrying coal to the goldfields. I know that; and I wish the people had then realised the possibilities of the agricultural districts, for if they had I should now be a few thousand pounds better off. Although I sympathise with those people who are not immediately to get a railway where they want it, I realise it would be wrong to construct that line to Collie and then go for eight or nine miles up the Great Southern Railway, and then throw out another line from Cuballing, especially remembering that the Great Southern line between Narrogin and Cuballing includes the heaviest grades on the Great Southern between Beverley and Albany. Ultimately coal will be carried by that route, and ultimately we shall have those heavy grades to contend with. Those grades can of course be reduced; and I would not say that if the conditions were better from Cuballing the line should not be built from there; but I maintain that if the land east of Cuballing is good, the land east of Narrogin is equally good. And without siding with one section of the community against the other, I cannot help thinking that the national policy must be to extend this railway with a view to junctioning ultimately with the goldfields line. I know the country better than most people, with the exception of one or two members of the House, and I know the proper route to follow is the extension to Cuballing.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): As a general principle this motion would receive my support, because I have always contended, and as a fact it was part of the policy of the Government of which I formed an humble member, that a board should be appointed to consider the question of constructing each of these agricultural railways. It may be well once more to emphasise the fact that the building of agricultural spur lines was first brought prominently—I say prominently—before the country by the Labour Government. Speaking at the National Show in Geraldton I stated that the Labour Government were then considering the question of the best

means of constructing cheap lines to assist the agricultural industry. And it is remarkable that the first line we contemplated constructing was a line to open up the Wickepin Agricultural Area. We did that because the Wickepin Area is one of the oldest in the State. I understand it was surveyed some fourteen years ago by the Forrest Government. It was no doubt selected by that Government owing to the goodness of the land; and there is no question the Wickepin Area is a wonderfully fertile piece of land, and is held by wonderfully good settlers, who deserve every encouragement from Parliament. Not only did the Labour Government intend to appoint a board, but actually appointed one; and in considering the proposed Coolgardie-Norseman railway the present Government utilised the information which the Labour Government gained from a special board. The Labour Government did not say, "We want to build and it is part of our policy to build a railway." They said, "We want to lay before Parliament the financial obligations that Parliament must assume in constructing the line." We wanted to give not a political view of the proposition, but a good business view by competent persons; consequently to report on the Norseman line we appointed the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. James Thompson, possibly the best authority in Australia on railway construction, the State Mining Engineer, Mr. Montgomery, a good authority on mining, who could give an opinion on the mineral possibilities of the district; and we appointed Mr. Douglas to investigate possible routes, and decide what traffic would be available for the line if constructed. We had their reports placed before us, and they were placed before members when the Bill was presented by the present Government for the construction of that railway. The information was undoubtedly of great assistance to the present Government in arriving at a decision to build the line. Therefore, if I had to consider the merits of different routes, I should still support a board of inquiry; because I believe the only way to protect this State from

a waste of money in the construction of agricultural railways is to have competent persons to give the best possible advice on each proposition. What I fear, and what I feared when a Minister, is political influence being brought to bear. We know what harm was done in Victoria by the building of political railways, and I fear we have had political railways built in this State. I appeal to members to protect the country against the building of lines which are not justified, and against building a line while another line the merits of which are far greater is cast aside. In order to shun that serious danger I appeal to members to realise that the only means of avoiding political influence is for Parliament to say, "We want a board of competent persons to consider the question, to report to Parliament, and not to report to the Ministry." I wish to note the difference between a board reporting to a Ministry and reporting to Parliament. I know Mr. Stoddart. He is an officer of the Works Department with whom I came in close touch in respect of the rabbit-proof fence and other big works; and he is unquestionably a very competent officer. But he is a subordinate officer, and it is distinctly unfair for any Government to ask a subordinate officer to report on a proposition adopted by the Government who send him out—the very proposition he is called on to criticise. That is distinctly unfair to the officer, and I am surprised that the Government should take such action. If an officer is appointed to report on behalf of the Ministry, he thoroughly understands the views of the Ministry, especially when he knows that a Bill is prepared; and the Bill was about to be presented to Parliament for the railway from Narrogin to Wickepin, but it was withheld. The Government, having adopted that route, asked a subordinate officer to criticise their work. It is not likely that we shall get the best possible results from a report of that sort, for it is a report to one side only. If the report favours the Government, nothing is said. Everything is finished, and there is no criticism. But if Parliament appointed a board, the board would know

that it did not matter what was the report, for there are two sides in Parliament, and the report would be criticised by one side or the other. A report which has to be submitted to Parliament is more comprehensive and more carefully prepared, because those responsible know that it will be subjected to the keenest criticism. If the report goes to the Ministry and if it favours the Ministerial proposition, there will be absolutely no criticism of the report; and that is what has happened in connection with this proposal. The Government adopted the report, and then sent Mr. Stoddart, a subordinate officer, to report on the proposition they had adopted. He falls in with the Government proposal, and his report is taken as a justification for that proposal. I shall not attach the slightest value to Mr. Stoddart's report; for after all, what did he do? One would assume from the Premier's remarks to-night that Mr. Stoddart went fully into the question; and there is one remarkable part of his report—I have not read it, but I will accept what I heard read by the Premier, when the report speaks of Mr. McBurney's route. How does Mr. Stoddart know what was Mr. McBurney's route? Mr. Stoddart did not see Mr. McBurney. I have seen Mr. McBurney dozens of times, and he told me he never saw Mr. Stoddart, and that Mr. Stoddart never went out in his direction at all. [*The Minister for Works*: Do you know that Mr. Stoddart never saw him?] No; but I question whether he did. And farther, I will tell the Minister Mr. Stoddart followed exactly the same route as the Premier, but where the Premier branched off to the Jewish Settlement Mr. Stoddart branched off in the other direction, to Cuballing. I also inquired into the route because I have been greatly interested in the matter, and members know that when each agricultural railway proposal was brought up I appealed for a board of inquiry, because I am afraid of political influence being brought to bear. Therefore, when I was in that locality I made inquiries as to what system Mr. Stoddart adopted in investigating

the relative merits of the two propositions.

The Minister for Works: From whom did you inquire?

Mr. JOHNSON: From every settler.

The Minister: Not from the Cuballing people?

Mr. JOHNSON: No. I went over the route; and that is more than the Premier or Mr. Stoddart can say.

The Premier: I have walked over it scores of times.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am speaking of a subsequent time, after the line was surveyed.

The Premier: I have led pack-horses over it scores of times.

Mr. JOHNSON: I did not know the hon. gentleman had gone over the surveyed route with pack-horses. I apologise; I did not know it had been surveyed that long. Mr. Stoddart went to Narrogin, saw Mr. Johnson the land agent there, drove along the Narrogin-Wickepin Road to Wickepin Hall about 16 miles and then from Wickepin Hall drove into Cuballing, caught the train and came back to Perth. He could not have possibly got information from the settlers in the locality because the best settlers there did not meet him, never saw him, were never interrogated by him at all; and how did he come to his decision? He did not make any inquiries; he simply took the lay of the country and being a surveyor, got an idea of the grades and afterwards got all the departmental files as to the other propositions. Consequently we did not get a comprehensive report from Mr. Stoddart because he did not make comprehensive inquiries. The only thing he could do was to go by the files. In February of last year the Premier did exactly the same. He drove along the Narrogin Road to Wickepin, called in at Potts's farm, had lunch there, drove to McCall's place and then across to the Jewish settlement. He had a particularly good time at the Jewish settlement. Consequently the Premier must have only crossed the surveyed route just close to the Jewish settlement where the route gets within a chain or so of the Wickepin Agricultural Area. I

want the House to remember that the Premier did not make a thorough inspection of the locality; neither did Mr. Stoddart make a personal inspection. Mr. Stoddart went down, studied the grades and was guided by departmental files as to the relative merits of the different propositions. There are one or two points in connection with the history of this matter on which the member for Gascoyne was slightly in error. The hon. member pointed out that when the deputations waited on me as Acting Premier they asked for a board. That is not so. We had three leagues. When it was announced by the Labour Government that we were going to build agricultural railways people came to the conclusion naturally that the first area to be served would be the Wickepin area. Everybody thought it was the best proposition and the Government were of that opinion. Leagues were formed immediately at Cuballing, Narrogin, and Pingelly, and deputations waited on me from each place. I told them that I was not going to pledge myself to any particular route, and all that I could say was that I would recommend the appointment of a board to report as to the best proposition. I told them that all we were going to do was to build a railway to serve the Wickepin area. The member for Gascoyne would lead the House to believe that there are only two routes. That is not correct. There are three routes proposed. As a matter of fact there are five.

The Minister for Works: Every settler has one I suppose?

Mr. JOHNSON: Every little township has one, and I am sorry to say the townships are considered by this Government more than the wants of the farmers. Narrogin comes along, Narrogin is considered and the farmer is forgotten. Cuballing comes along, Cuballing is considered and the farmer is forgotten. I want the Government to take more notice of the farmers, to consider the propositions from the farmers' point of view, and from that point of view alone. I want to clear up the point that there are only two routes, because such would discount the peti-

tion from the Wickepin farmers. If there were only two routes, members would be safe in condemning one route and not urging another because there would be only one other. That is not so. There are five routes, and consequently there is every room for inquiry as to which is the best route. So much for the history of the proposition. I would just like to point out that fortunately for myself and, I think, fortunately for the State, if I may be not thought too egotistical, during the recess I was working at my trade in the Wickepin Agricultural Area, and in my spare time I made it my business to have a good ride round that locality. I rode miles and miles to get a thorough grip of the relative merits of these propositions. I had no sooner reached Cuballing than I was asked my opinion on the proposed railway, and when I showed my nose in Narrogin I was immediately assailed by a crowd of Narrogin business people who asked me my opinion of the proposed railway. I told them that I had come down to work there and that I would use my spare time in going round to make inquiries. I will give the House my experience in riding from the 8-mile peg to the terminus of the railway at the 29-mile peg. I did not confine myself to riding on the surveyed route, but I rode out in different directions, mostly on the south-east side of the railway in order to see the value of the land; and when Mr. Stoddart states that the land for the first 15 miles, or the first portion of the proposed Cuballing-Wickepin line, is inferior to the first portion of the line from Narrogin, he makes a mistake. For the first five or six miles out after leaving Cuballing the land is fairly good and is under cultivation, but I admit that after that there is a strip of inferior country, though it is nothing like the country one traverses over the proposed Narrogin-Wickepin line. Consequently for eight miles from either Cuballing or Narrogin the routes cover practically the same country; but after leaving the 8-mile peg it is inferior country, and the fact that a large portion of it is not selected to-day, though it is within ten miles

of the Great Southern Railway, or if selected at all it is only just recently, goes to prove that it must be inferior land. As proof of that one can ride, with the exception of perhaps two miles, from the 8-mile peg to the 10-mile peg without getting off the survey pegs. There are no fences. There are some holdings in the gullies. We know that in the worst country we have gullies of fairly good country, and that is exactly what exists on the country traversed by this surveyed route. There are areas of fairly good country in the valleys, but outside those it is *salmon gum* and *sheoak*; it is spewy country, absolutely useless at times of the year. Several times I had difficulty in riding through it. My horse went to his knees in this country. There are miles upon miles of it.

Hon. F. H. Piessé: Was that country boggy in the summer?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: This was during recess. It was in June, early in the winter. I venture to say I could not get over it at all now, but even early in the winter there were places I had difficulty in riding over. Not only does the route traverse a considerable amount of that spewy country but it also touches a lot of *mallet bark* ridges with miles of *box poison*. I believe we will eventually utilise the spewy country for some purpose or other, but these *mallet bark* ridges covered with *box poison* will never be utilised for any purpose at all, and one rides for miles over the surveyed route through this *box poison* and these *mallet bark* ridges. The route goes right to the 25-mile peg before it gets anywhere near the Wickepin Agricultural Area. I would impress on members that the surveyed line does not touch what is known as the Wickepin Agricultural Area at all. It is a misnomer to call it Narrogin-Wickepin Railway, because it does not serve Wickepin at all. It goes within a chain of the south-east corner of the agricultural area, but it does not touch it. Beyond the 25-mile peg it runs to the Jewish settlement, and beyond that there is bad country again, this spewy country that I have already referred to. Consequently along the route it is very inferior country. I impress this point

on members, that in traversing that line one is six, or to be on the safe side, five miles from the good country. Members will follow me better perhaps when I say that one can go miles through this spewy country I refer to on the south-east side of the railway. I venture to assert that on the map the Premier has to-night members will see it marked "sand plain and inferior country" on the south-east side. Consequently the Government cannot expect to get any traffic from the south-east side of the railway. The country may be taken up some day, but if it is it will be of so little value that it will give very little traffic and consequently very little revenue to the proposed railway. By taking the route as it goes now the Wickepin farmer will be compelled to carry six miles to the line through inferior country. There are practically no farmers, with the exception of those I refer to farming in a small way in limited areas in these gullies which are mostly *janwood* with a little *salmon gum*. From the south-west side of the area little traffic will be received until the line touches the Wickepin Agricultural Area, and the farmers there will have to cart six miles away from Cuballing, which is now their booking station, back to the Wickepin line and then despatch their stuff to Narrogin to get it back again to Cuballing. As a matter of fact, the farmers close to the line have signed the petition praying Parliament to give this board. They say that although they are within five miles of the line it is absolutely useless to them because we are making them cart away from their market and go a roundabout way, and because it will be cheaper for them to continue what they are doing to-day, carting to Cuballing, the nearest booking station to the port of the State, namely, Fremantle. Let us take one illustration; take Mr. Potts, one of the oldest settlers in the State and possibly better known to other members than to me. He assures me that although his land is within five miles of the proposed line, he will not and cannot use the line; and he is one of the strongest opponents of the Government proposal, and one of the strongest advocates for the appointment of a board,

because he says the proposition is outrageous. He says, "Why it is adopted I cannot understand; but it will not serve the Wickepin farmers and it will not serve me, and I am the nearest one to it." [*The Minister for Works*: Why will it not serve him?] The position is you are making that man cart away from his market and take a roundabout route to get back to a given point; whereas it would be better for him to cart the extra distance into Cuballing, and save the freight over the 38 additional miles which will be entailed by the Government route. Mr. Potts is one of the prize-takers at all the shows in the Great Southern District; he is a recognised authority on the locality; and he says the proposition is not sound, will never pay, will not be used by the Wickepin farmers, and he makes a strong appeal to Parliament, through the petition, for the appointment of a board, because he knows that if a competent board is appointed a better route can be selected to serve the Wickepin farmers than the route proposed by the Government. Mr. Fairhead, another very old settler, is just outside the Wickepin Agricultural Area. He was a selector from the original Great Southern Land Company. [*The Minister for Works*: There are two Fairheads.] Their holdings adjoin. They are very old settlers, who own a fair area of country. The Fairhead brothers say exactly the same as Mr. Potts, that while the railway is practically at their back-doors, it will go in the wrong direction; that it will penalise them unnecessarily with extra freight. And they, the closest to the route and the most respected, most successful and oldest farmers in the locality, are the strongest advocates for a board of inquiry; and they appeal to Parliament to protect them against the Government's decision to build the line from Narrogin to Wickepin. Let us look at the petition presented by these farmers. They state in connection with the route:—

"Your petitioners respectfully submit that the line as at present surveyed will not serve the majority of the settlers in the Wickepin Agricultural Area or district."

As I have pointed out, the line is six miles from the nearest settlers on the north-west side; there are no settlers, or practically none, within a reasonable distance on the south-eastern side of the route; but on the north-western side the closest Wickepin farmer is six miles from the route.

The Minister for Works: Give me the name of the nearest farmer.

Mr. JOHNSON: I mentioned the Messrs. Fairhead and Mr. Potts.

The Minister for Works: Are they six miles away?

Mr. JOHNSON: About five miles away; but I am taking the average distance. On the right-hand side of the Narrogin route there is little settlement after you leave Narrogin for about eight miles; but on the left-hand side you pass through Mr. Smith's farm, which I believe is now let on lease, and you touch several other excellent holdings that have been worked for years. These holdings will provide considerable freight to a railway which will serve them without penalising them to the extent proposed by the Government.

Hon. F. H. Piesse: How far is the proposed route to the south of those holdings?

Mr. JOHNSON: The distance averages about five or six miles.

The Minister for Works: Are you speaking from actual figures or guessing?

Mr. JOHNSON: When in the district I made inquiries; and one can estimate fairly within half a-mile, especially when it is a question of five or six miles. As a matter of fact, I rode from the 8-mile across country to Holdaway's store; and I reckoned that from the 8-mile to Holdaway's was about 12 miles, and that at a right angle from Holdaway's the nearest point on the proposed line would be about six miles. But there are other settlers closer; and I believe the distance from the nearest settler in the Wickepin Agricultural Area would be about five miles. The settlers closest to the line are opposed to the line; and what can be said of those farthest away? I understand that the Wickepin Area, from the east or south-east to the north-west of it, is about 17 miles long;

consequently, if the settlers on the south are opposed to the line, what about those on the north? They are 17 miles away. Take Mr. McBurney. The distance of his land from the route must be 15 to 17 miles. He has a very large holding there, he is a very deserving settler, and furthermore was encouraged to take up his holding by a promise definitely made by a Government officer that the railway would go in that direction. That is where Mr. Stoddart gets his information that Mr. McBurney has a route. He has not a route at all. It is a route to be found on many lithographs which can be procured in the Lands Department to-day.

Hon. F. H. Piesse: How far is Mr. McBurney's land from the Great Southern Railway?

Mr. JOHNSON: I suppose it is about 18 to 20 miles from Popanyinning. The most distant farmer I visited was Mr. Nalder, who has to cart 30 miles from the Great Southern Railway. The new line will leave such settlers absolutely isolated.

The Minister for Works: Is the Cuballing route better for Mr. Nalder?

Mr. JOHNSON: I am not urging that at all. I say a better route can be selected to serve the whole area.

The Minister for Works: Do you urge that the Cuballing route would serve Mr. Nalder better than the Narrogin route?

Mr. JOHNSON: No; I am not urging Cuballing *versus* Narrogin; I am contending for a proper railway to serve the farmers on the Wickepin Agricultural Area. I should like to make one more appeal to the Minister to get away from Cuballing, Narrogin, and Kataning. Do not consider the towns; consider the farmer who has to get his produce to market. Give him the nearest possible route, whether the junction be at Narrogin, at Pingelly, at Wandering, or anywhere else—no matter where it junctions, provided it is the best possible route. I am not championing any route. I agree absolutely with the Wickepin farmers when they say the route is in the wrong place; and it is useless for the member for Swan (Mr. Gull) to say he is satisfied with this and that. He

knows absolutely nothing about it, and still is perfectly satisfied. So it is with all these agricultural railways. Members say they are perfectly satisfied. How can they be satisfied when they do not know the particulars of the case, and when they trust to those who bring in the Bills? If I were bringing in a Bill for a given railway, I should make out the best possible case for the route proposed; and I object to members swallow the everything said, and to the member for Swan deciding off-hand when he knows there is another side to the question. He will not wait to hear the other side; he is satisfied with one side, and decides at once how to vote because he is afraid that if he heard the other side he might change his mind. He is a poor representative of this State, if he will not wait to hear both sides of a question before deciding.

Mr. Gull: Did I not tell you that I knew the district before you were in the State?

Mr. JOHNSON: You saw the country when it was not settled, and you imagine that it is in the same state to-day. The country to-day and the country as you saw it are quite different. I wish the hon. member to see it now, and he will change his opinion on this proposition. The petition continues:—

“While passing through the district known as the Jewish Settlement, it compels these people, if they use it, to pay many miles of unnecessary freight, and this also applies to those farmers resident on the south-eastern portion of the Wickepin Area.”

That is the case exactly. The arguments I have been using in respect of Mr. Potts and Messrs. Fairhead apply to the Jewish Settlement. The Jewish settlers deserve every assistance. No doubt they are doing good work there, and I am happy to give them assistance and encouragement; but I object to penalising those people, because the line as proposed will compel them to go away from their market to get round to their market. We can give them a better line, save them some 10 or 12, possibly 15, miles of unnecessary freight, and can serve them with another line better than

they can be served by the Government proposal. The petitioners say also:—

"While we agree that the Jewish Settlement is a district that is closely settled, we claim there is another district, known as Landscape, which is thickly settled, and would not be served by the proposed line, but would be greatly assisted by a more central route."

The Landscape district is closely settled, and equally as deserving as the Jewish Settlement, though it is a settlement of a different sort. The Landscape people are absolutely isolated. Landscape is, I believe, in the electorate of Beverley, on the north-western portion of the Wickepin Area; and these settlers would be served by a more central route, as would be the Jewish settlers. If we accept the Government proposal it is only the Jewish settlement that will be served; and the Landscape people, who were induced to go there by the promise of this railway, are left in the cold and will have to struggle on for years; and if we permit the Bill to pass, the Landscape people, encouraged to settle there by a plan with a railway shown on it, will be left without any possibility of ever getting a railway. The line built by the Government will be too close to the Landscape settlers, and yet not close enough for them to use it; consequently they will suffer severely. Members should not be led away by the argument which no doubt will be advanced, that we ought to encourage the Jewish settlers. I wish to encourage them, but the Landscape Settlement is of equal importance, has an equal right to have the railway extended for its benefit. We can by adopting a more central route serve both settlements, and serve them well. The petitioners urge that, I urge it again, and I wish members to take that plea into consideration when voting on the Bill. The petition says:—

"That both these districts deserve every encouragement we fully appreciate. We respectfully suggest that both can only be served in addition to the Wickepin Area by the adoption of a more central route. The line if constructed as surveyed will compel the

majority of the settlers to continue carting their produce to the Great Southern Railway, and prevent them assisting to make the line a paying concern."

That should appeal to members. The Government proposal if adopted will prevent the people we wish to serve from utilising the line, which will become a white elephant, and will not pay for axle grease if it is constructed by the proposed route. But a more central route will make it one of the best agricultural lines ever constructed, because it will serve farmers who have for years past been in the locality, a locality which was recognised by the Forrest Government as one of the best districts we have in Western Australia. The very fact that the land was selected by them 14 years ago and that a special surveyor was sent there to encourage people to go on that land and take up that valuable tract of country shows that these people deserve the line, and that the Government are putting a burden on the State by building a line which cannot serve these people. If members support this railway they will do an injury to the State. If members are not prepared to accept all I said, let them appoint a board to test my utterances. I challenge the Government to appoint a board of competent persons to go into the question and I can assure members they will agree with the Wickepin farmers that a better route can be adopted that will be of benefit to the State. There is only one other point I need touch upon, and that is the contention urged by the Premier and which very likely influenced Mr. Stoddart in his report, and that is the proposal to continue the Collie-Narrogin line to the goldfields. When that line was proposed in the first instance every goldfields member with the exception of the Minister for Mines was opposed to the proposal. It was pointed out that the goldfields would not want the Collie coal for years, and at that time it was proved by the then member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) according to the forest ranger's report that there was a firewood supply of 14 years in close proximity to the railway, and I suppose

in the direction of the Norseman railway there is perhaps another 14 years' firewood supply. Therefore the Collie-goldfields railway is not likely to be within practical politics for the next 20 years. But supposing we admit it is for the sake of argument, we have to realise that the line from Collie to Narrogin is on a 1 in 80 grade, and if the line is to be continued it must be on that grade of 1 in 80. If the Government build the line as proposed they will not only have to make the grade 1 in 80 but if the line is to carry coal to the goldfields it will have to be a heavy line. There must be heavy earthworks. Then the agricultural railway follows the contour of the country, and if we say we are going to put this line down as an agricultural line and ultimately use it as a goldfields line how can that be done by following the contour of the country? Extensive earth works are not carried out, therefore the formation will be useless. The sleepers used on agricultural railways are half round and would not be serviceable for a heavy line to carry Collie coal, therefore the sleepers would be no good. The rails on the line from Collie to Narrogin are at least 60lbs., and the rails on the Narrogin line would be 45lbs. at most, therefore they would be useless. The Government say this is a portion of a line to the goldfields, if so they will have to pull up the rails and take them away; they will have to take up the sleepers and cart them away; and they will have to shift the earthworks. The proposition is not reasonable. An agricultural railway is not suitable to carry coal to the goldfields, but it is useless for the Government to say this line will eventually be continued to the goldfields. If the line is carried to the goldfields I doubt if members of the House will see it constructed, because I do not think Collie coal will ever go to the goldfields. Still the line may be constructed to open up agricultural areas, because I believe there is some good agricultural land along that line, but the railway will never go through in my opinion, to carry Collie coal. If it goes farther, from an agricultural point of view it may as well go from Pingelly to Popanyinning and

Cuballing. I do not know that I can say more with the exception of making one more appeal to members to give this board of inquiry. The farmers are not urging one route against another, but they are appealing to Parliament to protect them against the Government proposition. They ask for the appointment of a board of experts, competent men to go into the question, and they are satisfied to rest their case with the members of that board, because no competent board will confirm the Government proposal. I ask members to get away from what they are drifting into, a consideration of the agitation of the towns. We have Narrogin residents coming down asking members to start a line from Wickepin to Narrogin, half for Wickepin and half for Narrogin. It is wrong for them to do that. What we want is to serve the farmer, and I have no objection to the farmer urging his own claim, but I object to the townspeople coming into the proposition urging the Government to build a line to increase the benefit to the towns. If members view the question honestly and fairly they must come to the conclusion that this board of inquiry should be appointed.

Explanations.

Mr. G. S. F. COWCHER (Williams): On a point of explanation as to the petitions I wish to contradict the remark that the Clerk of the Assembly had anything to do with the delay in presenting the petitions. The facts of the matter, as the member for Guildford knows, are that I told him I was going to present a petition, and he said that I had better see that it was in order. He told me to take it to the Clerk of the Assembly who would see that the petition was in order. Thinking I could get it presented straight away, I went to the Clerk, but I found he could not then see that it was in order as the House was on the point of meeting. The petition was handed to the Clerk just before the House met, and he informed me that he would like to look into the petition and see if it conformed to the rules of the House. If there has been any fault it

was mine and not the Clerk's. The following day was Wednesday, private members' day, and I said there was no hurry if I could get the petition before the House on the following Wednesday.

Mr. Johnson : What did I tell you when you came to me ?

Mr. COWCHER : I said there would be no hurry because the following day was Wednesday, a private members' day, and I could not present the petition before. After this the member for Guildford came to me and said "You can present the petition to-morrow." I had previously arranged with the Clerk that there was no hurry until the following Wednesday, therefore, I could not do as the member wished. I want members to understand that the Clerk was not to blame, but that if there was any blame, it was mine. There was no blame attributable to the Clerk as inferred by the member for Gascoyne. I deny that the Clerk had anything to do with it.

Mr. A. A. Horan : Both petitions are out of order.

Mr. COWCHER : I wanted them to go before the Assembly as correctly as possible, and I distinctly deny that there was any delay in presenting the petitions. Another petition came forward the following week. I laid the matter before the Clerk of the Assembly, and that is the reason why the petition did not come forward until the following Wednesday. Those are the facts of the case, and I deny that the Clerk of the Assembly had anything to do with the matter. I am not speaking to the question at all now, only in explanation.

Mr. W. J. BUTCHER : The member for Williams in making the explanation to the House deliberately charged me with accusing the Clerk of the House with being responsible for delaying the petitions. I emphatically deny that I made the statement or any words that can be considered to mean such a thing. What I said was that he was pressed by his constituents to present the petition, and he gave as an excuse that he had to leave the petition in the hands of the Clerk of the House so that that officer might see that it was in order.

Mr. Taylor : That is not true.

Mr. BUTCHER : I gave the House that statement and I do not attribute the slightest blame to the Clerk of the House, far from it. I said that was the excuse the member offered to his constituents for not presenting the petition within a reasonable time. He held it for a fortnight and did not present it. That is the statement I made, and I hope when members comment on my remarks, if they wish to prove my remarks are not correct they must absolutely adhere to the truth of the statements I make, or it only complicates matters. I deny that my statement accused the Clerk of the House of anything at all.

Mr. COWCHER : I would like to say that the member for Gascoyne has not been correctly informed. No pressure was brought to bear on me to present the petition. The member who spoke to me was Mr. Reynolds, the moving spirit in the matter. The member for Gascoyne has been misled; if he had mentioned this matter to me before I would have put him right.

Mr. JOHNSON : As my name has been brought up in connection with the presentation of the petitions, I had a conversation with the member for Williams and told him exactly what he would have to do. I told him that he would have to vouch that the petition was respectfully worded and ended with a prayer and that it was in accordance with the Standing Orders. When he left me he went to the Clerk. He told me that the Clerk had not had time to look through it and consequently he could not present the petition. I said "Very well." I thought it remarkable; I had never gone to the Clerk with any petition I had presented; still I did not think there was any strong objection to that; it did not enter into my mind to protest. The hon. member thought it could only be presented on private members' day. I told him he could present the petition the following day and he thanked me, and I fully expected it would have been presented the next day.

Debate.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) : After all the discussion with reference to

the petitions under review, I would like to say that I understood to a small degree from the remarks of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) that there had been some neglect on the part of the Clerk of the House. I am pleased to understand that the hon. member did not intend to convey that impression. I have been too long in the House to think that the Clerk would be in any way neglectful of his duty in that particular. It is not in my opinion the duty of the Clerk. If a petition is to be presented, the Standing Orders provide how it should be worded and signed before it can be presented, and how the hon. member presenting it must assure Parliament that it is in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Direction as to Order.

Mr. Speaker: That is not the question before the House. That matter has been fully explained. Indeed I am glad that members have made reference to the Clerk, showing there is no intent to reflect in any way on him; but the question before the House is not the presentation of the petition.

Mr. Taylor: I think you will find that the motion concludes with the words, "in accordance with the petition presented by the hon. member for Williams." I take it for granted that the petition I hold in my hand is the petition which, according to the records of Parliament, was presented by the hon. gentleman, and I believe I am perfectly in order in discussing the petition.

Mr. Speaker: I warn the hon. member, as I have done on several occasions, not only this session but in previous sessions, that I will not take any dictation from any member of this House. I have ruled that the hon. member must adhere to the strict business before the House. The question of presenting the petition and the formality about it has already been dealt with.

Mr. Taylor: But, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member persists, I shall order him to leave the Chamber during the remainder of the sitting.

Mr. Bath: Before the debate on this motion terminates, it is my intention to

address myself to the motion, which contains the words "in accordance with the petition presented by the honourable member for Williams."

Mr. Speaker: That is right.

Mr. Bath: In addressing the House, I desire to have some specific ruling as to what is intended by those words, "in accordance with the petition presented by the honourable member for Williams," whether in discussing the motion the question of the legitimacy of the petition can be dealt with in its bearing on the argument as to the respective routes; because members should be in a position to know this, in order that they may keep within the rules of the House and in accordance with your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will be quite in order in referring to the petition in the manner in which he proposes; but the member for Mt. Margaret was dealing with a matter that was disposed of on a point of order. It is quite within the hon. member's rights to refer to the petition in the course of his speech, but there is no doubt in my mind the hon. member was a little out of order in referring to the formalities in presenting the petition. I only desired to put the hon. member in order. That is all.

Mr. Taylor: I am sorry I caused so much heat without any need. I was endeavouring to point out, in connection with the petition which I hold in my hand that it was not alone a crime on the part of the hon. member in neglecting to present it sooner than it was, but I want to say that it is a forgery, and if I am not allowed to deal with the legitimacy of the petition I cannot prove it.

Mr. Speaker: Let me explain to the hon. member, without desiring to hurt anyone's feelings. The matter raised had been discussed; the point the hon. member took had been dealt with on a point of order.

Mr. Taylor: There was no point of order raised.

Mr. Speaker: An explanation was made which was accepted.

Debate.

Mr. TAYLOR (continuing): There were explanations by the members for

Gascoyne, Williams, and Guildford, but there was no point of order raised. All I desire to say, without perhaps raising any more bad feeling, is that this petition has not been presented in accordance with the Standing Orders provided for the presentation of petitions.

Mr. Johnson: What petition are you referring to?

Mr. TAYLOR: The petition presented by the Narrogin-Wickepin people.

Mr. Walker: That is not the petition referred to.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am not bound to bring forward any petition any member desires. It is my province to address the House, and I want to show that in this petition, which according to the hon. member presenting it contains 249 signatures, after going through it, and not very carefully, I have discovered 79 forgeries, 23 of them admitted and 56 which any person can detect as written by the same hand. Ten names have been written in one hand.

Mr. Cowcher: Ten good men.

Mr. Bath: That is sufficient evidence for a board of inquiry.

Mr. TAYLOR: The certificate, in accordance with the Standing Orders, is:—

“I certify this petition contains 249 signatures, and is in conformity with the rules and orders of the House.—
G. S. F. Cowcher.”

The hon. member may have presented this petition without having perused it, without having recognised and found the discrepancies in it that I have pointed out to the House. I am not accusing the hon. member of knowingly misleading the House, but it is the duty of a member of this House in presenting a petition to see that the petition conforms with the Standing Orders, and it is not the duty I hold of the Clerk. It only becomes the property of the House after it has been presented and accepted. It is then in the hands of the Clerk. This is the only petition I have looked at. I know two were presented, but it is a most significant fact that one petition was in the hands of the member for the district at least a fortnight before this, and that the two were presented on the same day. More than that, I say it is the duty of

the member for the district to give the House some of his valuable knowledge of this district, as showing the necessity for this line, either from Narrogin or Cuballing. It is unfair for a member to sit in silence while members are discussing a matter concerning his electorate. I waited for the hon. member for Williams to rise—[*Mr. Cowcher:* There is plenty of time yet]—but when he rose it was only in explanation. He says now there is plenty of time, after members have given their utterances on this question. The member for the district, who should know the best of the five routes mentioned by the member for Guildford, should be one of the first to speak. What is the member for; to give his opinion to the House after a decision is arrived at? I say that it should be in the earlier stages of the debate that he should address members. There are members who have not visited either of the routes, and it would have been wise for the hon. member to give the House the value of his opinion. [*Mr. Bath:* That is why we need inquiry.] We cannot get information from the member for the district. I suppose it is because there are two camps. Perhaps that is the reason. We have it that the surveyor who went to report never traversed the Cuballing-Wickepin route at all. [*The Minister for Works:* It is not true.] The member for Guildford who has been on the spot says it is true, and I was told by people from that district that this surveyor never travelled the route from Cuballing to Wickepin.

The Minister for Works: I had the surveyor's personal assurance to-day that he did.

Mr. TAYLOR: Then the hon. gentleman of course must accept that assurance, but the people in that area told me that the surveyor never travelled the route from Cuballing to Wickepin, but that he accepted some *ex parte* statement at some hotel. I do not know the officer, but I say that what we have here to-night and the reticence of the member for the district are justification for the motion of the member for Gascoyne being carried. This House should be in possession of the report of an inquiry

board. We cannot get the information in any other way. I am sure the case made out by the member for Guildford, who put in some months there and went to the trouble of riding over the various routes and inspecting a large portion of the country, shows there is justification. I have no feeling in the matter whatever. It makes no difference to me whether the railway starts from Narrogin or Cuballing; but while I am a member of this House it is my duty to see that the people's money is expended in the best interests of the State. That is the only attitude I am taking up to-night. I believe there must be some fear on the part of the Premier or on the part of the Government when they will not let the light of day shine on these propositions. What would be the cost of a board of permanent heads of departments, as these boards are composed? No additional cost.

The Premier : You have had their report; I have read it to you.

Mr. Johnson : They got it from departmental files.

The Premier : From personal experience.

Mr. Johnson : Like yours, 40 or 50 years ago.

Mr. TAYLOR : I do not wish to depreciate the value of the Premier's knowledge while he was going through that portion of the State leading a pack horse. I do not desire to depreciate his knowledge of the country, for I think he knows all about the lands of the State. His very training as a surveyor would enable him, I believe, to give a better opinion upon lands than any ordinary person in the State. I do accept his statement in reference to that, and I want to say here that I am pleased that his references to our light lines, which he made 18 months ago, have been borne out by facts. I must give him every credit for having at that time stated that the Government would be able to construct these lines at a cheap rate, for his prophecy as to the cost has come true. The argument advanced by the Premier as to the continuity of the line from Collie on striking the goldfields is out of court, for that line from Collie

to Narrogin was in the first instance brought down by the James Government as a line to supply the goldfields with coal. When it was found that that idea failed they brought the line down purely as an agricultural one. Now the position is that the Government are trying to use the argument that this line will be continued from Narrogin in order to strike the goldfields railway line. When the Collie-Narrogin line was suggested the then Government realised that it would never be carried to the goldfields junction in order to supply fuel to the fields for there were then some 14 years' supply of wood on the Eastern Goldfields. This wood is the very best fuel in Australia for producing steam. We have now the railway line from Coolgardie to Norseman, which is opening up another large area containing a finer supply of wood than has been cut out by the Kunrawang Company, which has supplied the firewood for the fields for so many years past. By no stretch of imagination can the Collie-Narrogin line be expected to be continued to strike the goldfields line; and therefore this argument used by the Premier in support of the contention that Narrogin should be the point of intersection for the line under debate is altogether out of place. In discussing the Collie-Narrogin line we are dealing purely with an agricultural one, and it is hardly a fair thing in this Chamber for the Leader of the House to come here dealing solely with an agricultural line, and at the same time stating that it would be a line for the purpose of supplying the fields with fuel. The member for Gascoyne read two letters from the then Honorary Minister (Mr. C. A. Piesse), which the Premier has now practically said are not correct. [*The Premier* : What is that ?] You said the letters the hon. member read out were not exactly correct. [*The Premier* : The difference I pointed out was that I understood he promised an inquiry, but the member for Gascoyne said it was a board.] The impression conveyed to my mind was that the Premier said the letters were not correct. We have, however, a letter written by the

Honorary Minister to Mr. Reynolds, of Cuballing, on January 18th, 1907, in which he says:—

“ I am indeed annoyed to find the Government have not fulfilled the promise I made the deputation at the Narrogin Show, and I have written to Perth about the matter asking that my pledge be at once redeemed. I am very sorry for the delay, but it is no fault of mine. I reported fully the next morning in Perth and quite expected that the subject would receive prompt attention. Anyway I trust there will be no more delay. Your deputation made out a case that no self-respecting Government could pass by, and the inquiry should have been held within the time I promised. I have sent your letter on to the Premier with my remarks thereon.”

Hon. F. H. Piesse : Did he say anything about a board there?

Mr. TAYLOR : It was an inquiry. Then another letter was written as late as the 15th July by the same person, and the member for Gascoyne vouches that the typewritten copy of it, which he read, is a true copy. What the Honorary Minister said in that letter which was written to Mr. Reynolds, is as follows :—

“ I am in receipt of your letter of May 2nd, covering a copy of the petition as sent to the member for the district. Without in any way committing myself to any particular route I feel at perfect liberty to state that your petition will demand, at the hands of Parliament, a more searching inquiry into the matter than was given last year. I still consider the promise I made on behalf of the Premier at the Narrogin show is still unfulfilled, and your petition should at least help to have my promise carried out, as I intended it should be at the time of making it. It seemed to me at the time absolutely necessary in the interests of both Narrogin and Cuballing that a more full inquiry should be made, and I promised it. How this promise was fulfilled is common knowledge and I am not satisfied with it. I take it that your committee will loyally agree and abide by the decision of the board you

ask for, if it should be granted, and I trust it may, even if it is adverse to your wishes.”

The Premier : The Minister for Works will read the minute.

Mr. TAYLOR : I am saying that in the face of this letter there is no doubt in my mind, in the mind of Mr. Reynolds, or in that of the member for Gascoyne, or anyone else who reads the letter from the Honorary Minister, that, acting on behalf of the Premier and the Government, the Hon. C. A. Piesse made a promise that a board of inquiry should be held. It is no stretch of imagination to say that the word “board” referred to in the letter meant a board of inquiry. [*The Minister for Works* : He did not make himself plain to that effect in his minute.] I am not responsible for his clearness or otherwise of his minute on the file, I can deal only with what is before me. In the face of those two letters I think the Premier should have carried out what his representative promised to the people at the Narrogin show. Why was this board not granted ? Is there any doubt on the question of whether the officer of the Works or the Lands Department, who was sent down to report to the Minister as to the most advisable route, went over the line at all or did he come back with a report without having inspected the route ? If he did so it is about time the Minister dealt with that officer. [*Mr. Scaddan* : That was also done on the Greenhills extension.] I am not dealing with that proposition now, but only with the one before the House. [*Mr. Scaddan* : He stayed four days at one place.] I am sorry to hear the member for Ivanhoe make that statement. It is appalling to think that the administration of a department is so lax, that an officer sent out to report on a railway route should remain at one place for four days. [*Mr. Scaddan* : And should depend on a policeman.] That should not make the Minister for Works laugh. He, like every other Minister, must depend on his officers for such reports; and if he finds that the officers do not report faithfully, the Minister should not sit in this House and laugh about it.

The Minister for Works: Will you oblige me with a proof that Mr. Stoddart's report is incorrect, when he assures me he did go over the route?

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not wish the Minister to misinterpret my statement. I told the Minister that I was informed by a person from that area that the officer sent by the department to report on the route from Cuballing to the Wickepin Area never traversed it.

The Minister for Works: Do you think it right to give publicity to such a hearsay statement?

Mr. TAYLOR: Perhaps the Minister wishes me to think that respectable farmers when they come to Perth are people we cannot believe.

The Premier: The Minister will take his officer's word in preference to information picked up casually.

Mr. Johnson: What I said was, the settlers there informed me that Mr. Stoddart never interviewed them.

Mr. TAYLOR: Then where did he get his information from?

The Premier: From his own investigations.

Mr. TAYLOR: By dodging the settlers on the Wickepin Area, or by dodging around Narrogin. I have met several of those settlers, some of them men from the goldfields, whom I have known for many years, honourable men whose word I can take, and they tell me as absolutely correct what I have stated to-night, and it is more than borne out by the member for Guildford. And without any scepticism or prejudice I ask, why do the Government object to a board composed of heads of departments, a board which will cost nothing to the State, and which will involve only the inconvenience of its members' absence for a few days from their offices, making an inspection of the route? The Government must be frightened by the report. There is something behind it. [*The Premier:* You would always find something.] I am putting a fair proposition to the House. If there is no fear of something leaking out, why prevent an inquiry by a board? We can get no information from the member for the district. We have heard of the Premier's knowledge of the country, acquired

some years ago when he went through it with a pack-horse. The Premier, when a youth, was not thinking of how many sleepers it would take to a mile, or whether white ants would eat salmon gum. We want more evidence than a mere statement by the Premier that he knows the country, and we have it that the officer who went down to report never traversed the line. The Minister says he did; but we have overwhelming testimony that the officer never interviewed any settlers on the Wickepin Area, the people concerned. Surely in common fairness to those people the officer should have come in contact with them. [Mr. Johnson: As the board did at Norseman, where they interviewed everybody.] Yes; I am told they interviewed everybody. The board consisted of gentlemen appointed by the Labour Government; the present Government in building the Norseman line are now acting on the advice of those gentlemen; and no section of the people in the district served by that line are growling about the route. They know it is no use petitioning the House; that the pro's and con's were investigated by men competent to weigh them. They know the inquiry was not conducted by one officer who never went over the route, as is alleged in the present case. When I speak of the settlers I have interviewed I do not speak of the people of Cuballing. I am not aware that one of them spoke to me about the proposal, but the Wickepin settlers have asked me to represent them, to get some inquiry to ensure fair play at the hands of the Government. The matter does not affect me or my constituents. I could with greater ease sit in silence, not advocating the settlers' case to-night, when their own representatives are absolutely silent and will not give the House any information as to the route this line should take in the interests of their own electorate and of the State. That information should have been given at the outset. I would point out with all due respect that the member for the district should have given that information in the early part of the debate, to guide members who could not visit the locality. If this were a projected railway for the Mt. Margaret dis-

trict, and there were a battle of routes, and if my constituents were pulling two ways, I flatter myself I should have the courage of my convictions, and should from my place in the House tell the Government which route I considered preferable. I may refer members to a motion in the old Assembly Chamber, when the member for York (Mr. Monger) moved that a railway be not continued from Malcolm to Leonora but be continued to Lawlers. I then represented the whole of that territory. I opposed his motion, and he was unsuccessful. Had I been like members opposite, who sit in silence, frightened to take responsibility, frightened to tell the House what they believe to be the best proposition, I should have followed their example. I am confident the member for Williams (Mr. Cowcher) is not void of knowledge. He knows which is the best route. On that point I should not pit my knowledge against his; but I pit myself against him in trying to get justice for the Wickepin settlers; and I say those people are justified in demanding a board of inquiry, and their claim is doubly convincing when I find the Government opposing the motion, and that a petition presented to this House is a forgery, which I challenge any member to deny; and when I find that another petition was held back for a fortnight till the forgery came along. [*Member*: Unintentionally.] Then it is a strange coincidence, so strange that it would not do for the electors of Mt. Margaret; and I do not think it will suit the Wickepin Area people either. I am pleased to know the saddle has been put on the right horse with regard to these petitions and their presentation. I want to ask, when a petition is presented to the House and it is proved beyond doubt that the House has been misled and that the petition does not comply with the Standing Orders, what action can be taken? [*Mr. Scaddan*: The hon. member should withdraw it at once.] If the member for Ivanhoe were Speaker and he gave that ruling I would ask that the petition be withdrawn by the member, but I ask what action would be taken? The Government have

been petitioned by these people to expend a certain amount of money on their territory. The petition is a fraud. I do not want such a fraud perpetrated in this House again. I have gone through the petition and compared the handwriting, and I say that there are 79 frauds; 23 are admitted. There has been a case made out in favour of the Government withdrawing from the position they have taken up and appointing a board. In justification to the officer it is necessary that something more should be done to prove whether he is guilty of what he has been charged with by the people living in that area, or whether he is innocent. I am one of the last to charge any man——

The Minister for Works: One of the first.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have never made a charge yet which I have not proved up to the hilt. I am not making a charge now.

The Minister for Works: No, you will squeeze out of it somehow.

Mr. TAYLOR: The hon. member knows something about squeezing. They do wring clothes I believe. When Ministers interject, they must take what they get. If I interject, I do not strangle my narrative and leave the Chamber. There is overwhelming testimony for giving those settlers a fair show; there is evidence of the necessity for railway communication to this area. I support the motion.

Mr. G. S. F. COWCHER (Williams): I wish to say I am perfectly satisfied that the people on the east side of the line and others cannot possibly be served with one railway. There at people at Landscape and Pingelly, and those on the eastern side, who can possibly be served with the one railway; and we want one line to serve the majority of the people in the best interests of the State as a whole; but I contend that one line will not be able to serve them all. About one-half of the people who signed the petition from Cuballing have nothing whatever to do with my electorate. The member for Guildford has stated that there is poor land out south of Narrogin

and also east of Cuballing; that is a fact. One will find poor country no matter where one goes in those parts; but possibly the member for Guildford did not see the country round about the lakes. Did the hon. member go round the lakes?

Mr. Johnson : They are in a different direction altogether.

Mr. COWCHER : No, the lakes are in this direction. They are not large lakes, but small claypans. The line may go in a north-easterly direction, not as a goldfields railway altogether, but as an agricultural line to open up the country, and if it were so desired the line could join with the Greenhills line. I have always advocated a line in that direction, and I contend that a line should go in that direction, or through the eastern portion of the district, and ultimately junction with the goldfields line. The country warrants it as an agricultural railway. I have not made a personal inspection of the line, but I know the country and I contend that it is good and of a similar character right through, with the exception of small patches. Occasionally one might come across a small sandplain, but that is soon got over. Select committees and Royal Commissions, as far as I have seen since I have been a member of the House, do no good.

Mr. Taylor : This will not be a select committee.

Mr. COWCHER : It is of a similar character; it is an inquiry to take the responsibility from the Government, and I contend that any Government who have not backbone enough to stand by their own convictions should be got out and let another Government come in.

Mr. Taylor : I have been thinking that for two years.

Mr. COWCHER : I do not believe in putting responsibility on other people's shoulders. If we have a Government let them take the responsibility.

Mr. Taylor : We have not one.

Mr. COWCHER : I contend we have a Government who can take the responsibility, but if they are not able to do it, then they should let others take it.

Mr. Angwin : Do you believe that in regard to the Wagin flour-mill?

Mr. COWCHER : When we come to deal with the Wagin flour-mill I shall speak in the same manner as I do now. Whatever I have to say I shall say fearlessly, whether I please anyone or not. It is not the people near the Great Southern Railway this line is to serve; it is the people back from that railway. Those near the railway are fighting the battle of the routes while the people in the back country suffer. We want to serve the people in the back country, and I hope that the Government will bring down a Bill for the route as outlined by them.

On motion by the *Minister for Works*, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.31 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 22nd August, 1907.

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Questions: Magistrate at Derby, a Complaint	100
Municipality Petition, Cott-tee	100
Bills: Police Offences (consolidation), 3a.	100
Public Health (consolidation), 2a. moved	100
Port Hedland-Marble Bar Railway, 1a.	100

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the *Colonial Secretary*: Goldfields Water Supply Administration—Annual Report to 30th June, 1907.