

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 7th August, 1907.

allowed a contract to be made for a term of two years. The price was 2½d. per unit, less 12½ per cent. discount.

	PAGE
Address-in-Reply, Presentation	677
Petitions (2), Narrogin-Wickepin Railway Route	677
Questions: Railway Stations Lighting	677
Betting at Goldfields Sports	677
Heitmann-Lander Inquiry, more Papers	677
Bill: Bankers' Cheques, &c.	678
Statistics, &c. postponed	713
Motions: Railway Fuses (free) to Public Officers	678
Pastoral Industry, to Inquire generally	680
Sliding Scale and its effect, to Inquire	689
Land Claim at Guildford	707
Municipal Subsidies, how Overpaid	709
Mining Accidents, Return	711
Papers: Railway Rolling Stock	679
Report: Harbour Works, Geraldton	709

HEITMANN-LANDER INQUIRY— MORE PAPERS.

Mr. HEITMANN: I draw the attention of the Minister for Mines to the fact that all the papers for which I moved last Wednesday have not been laid on the table.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I laid on the table all the papers I know of in connection with this matter. If the hon. member had rung me up by telephone and informed me that any of the papers were missing, I should have been glad to supply them. I am not aware, nor do I think, that any papers have been wilfully withheld by the department.

Mr. HEITMANN: I did not know until recently that any were missing. The motion for papers included the departmental files put in as evidence, also papers relating to the cancellation of Warden Troy's appointment. The departmental files mentioned have not been placed on the table.

QUESTION—BETTING AT GOLD- FIELDS SPORTS.

Mr. COLLIER asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been directed to the apparent contradiction involved in the respective replies of the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General to the representations of goldfields residents on the question of betting at goldfields sports gatherings; in that the Attorney General replied to a petition on July 31 that he was taking certain action; while the Colonial Secretary on August 2 said that he could not give a definite reply, as the matter had yet to be considered by the Government? 2, What action is intended by the Government to be taken?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No contradiction, apparent or otherwise, can be found in the respective replies of the Honourable Ministers referred to. 2, It is the intention of the Attorney General to submit at an early date a report deal-

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

Prayers.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY, PRESENTA- TION.

The SPEAKER reported that he had received the following reply from His Excellency:—

"Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly,—I thank you for your Address in reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament, and for your expressions of loyalty to Our Most Gracious Sovereign.—*Fred. G. D. Bedford, Governor.*"

PETITIONS — NARROGIN-WICKE- PIN RAILWAY ROUTE.

Mr. COWCHER (Williams) presented two petitions, one for and one against the selected route of the proposed railway.

Petitions received and read.

QUESTION—RAILWAY STATIONS LIGHTING.

Mr. WALKER (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: Can he supply particulars of the Perth Gas Company's contract, and such other information as will enable the House to understand its nature?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: The original request was for a three-years contract. I declined that, and

ing with the matter, and on consideration of same the Government will decide on the action to be taken.

BILL—BANKERS' CHEQUES.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION—RAILWAY PASSES (FREE) TO PUBLIC SERVANTS.

Mr. J. SCADDAN (Ivanhoe) moved :—

"That a return be laid upon the table showing—1, The number of free railway passes granted to public servants for the year ended 30th June, 1907, and the cost of same. 2, The names of officers and the nature of their duties. 3, The mileage travelled by each in the course of their official duties."

He said : Last session during the passage of the Estimates, on one or two occasions I drew attention to the enormous amount of money placed on the Estimates for travelling expenses of officers of various departments, and I said that it would be interesting to have a return of the cost of the passes issued to those officers, and the nature of their duties, and of the mileage travelled in the course of their official duties. I made a statement, and members can bear me out, that there were many officers of the public service residing about Perth and in the suburbs who were in possession of all-lines passes, but that it was very rare that they left Perth except to go to and from their places of residence or pleasure resorts. In view of the fact that the State's finances are in anything but a pleasing condition—the Treasurer can bear me out there ; he makes the statement very frequently in connection with any requests I make for grants for public services, and I can repeat it now—in view of the State's finances we should take into consideration the advisability of allowing public servants, especially those in receipt of high salaries, to pay for their pleasures as other people do. I fail to see why the Under Secretary of a department, or any other chief officer

of a department, should receive an all-lines railway pass, if he has no use to put it to in the course of his official duties. I know officers who travel hundreds of miles in discharging their official duties who do not receive passes ; their fares are paid as occasion arises. In the Mines Department and in the Inspection of Machinery Branch I know that the subordinate officers travel hundreds of miles every year in the course of their duties, and the cost of each journey is paid as occasion arises ; but we find that the chiefs of these departments are in possession of all-lines passes, and the only service they put them to is to travel to and from their homes, and at times during summer to a resort on the sea coast.

The Minister for Works : Do you include members of Parliament ?

Mr. SCADDAN : It is a totally different question. Members of Parliament have to travel throughout the country and on public business continually, and it is very rare that a member of Parliament uses his pass for other than the public service. Of course Ministers smile when I make that statement. I exclude Ministers because I know they are given to public picnics in which they not only receive the cost of railway travelling but also so much a day to cover hotel expenses, etcetera. Members of Parliament do not get these trips out of the country. No wonder Ministers smile. However, the country has got sick and tired of that sort of thing. What I want to know is, how many officers of our public departments receive all-lines passes for which the Railway Department must receive payment. I want to know whether many of these officers cannot provide themselves with season tickets to travel to and from Perth to attend to their duties in their offices, and then if they are requested to go to the country on official business they can receive free passes exactly the same as the subordinate officers do today. Why should the public be asked to supply these public servants with all-lines passes for the purposes of their private ends ? I do not want Ministers to stretch this to mean that these officers

obtain these passes so that they can receive some emolument from them. I want it to be clear that this country should not bear the cost of officers travelling to and fro on the railways purely for pleasure at the cost of the country. I would like a return showing the names of the officers and the number of miles they travel on the railways in the course of their official duties, so that we can see whether the country is getting its money's worth.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): There is no objection to paragraphs 1 and 2 of the motion, but to comply with paragraph 3 would be an absolute impossibility. We do not keep the records. We are the best judge of whether these passes should be granted, and when the names are submitted, when the Estimates are under consideration members can attack the Government if passes are given to any Government officials which in members' opinions are uselessly granted. We should, I think, strike out the last paragraph, because if we leave it in the motion it would be absolutely impossible to comply with the request. We do not keep a record of the different miles a person travels. If a man goes to Kalgoorlie to-day and then on to Menzies, and from Menzies to Davyhurst, and back again to Menzies, he keeps a record of the different places he goes to, but he does not put down that he travelled so many miles. It would be impossible for the information to be obtained. I much regret that the hon. member in seeking this information drew special attention to one of the heads of the branches of my department, because we hear so much from that hon. member in connection with the administration of that special department.

Mr. Scaddan: What department did I mention?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Inspection of Machinery branch.

Mr. Scaddan: I did nothing of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Oh! If the hon. member says he did not we can take it for granted. The Government have no objection to give the in-

formation asked for in the first two paragraphs; that asked for in the third paragraph it would be an absolute impossibility to supply, and I ask the hon. member to withdraw paragraph 3. The rest of the information we will be only too willing to supply.

Mr. SCADDAN: I would point out that it is rather strange we can have a return of the mileage travelled by subordinate officers in discharge of duties, while we cannot get such a return in the case of superior officers. The Minister said that I mentioned the case of the Chief Inspector of Machinery. To a certain extent I had that gentleman in my mind, with others; but I would point out that we are obtaining the mileage travelled by subordinate officers. In the Inspection of Machinery report each year there is given the mileage travelled by each inspector in the course of his duties, which shows that a record is kept. If they keep a record of the subordinate officers' travellings, why is it not kept in the case of the chief officer? Personally, I think there will be no difficulty in obtaining the information, but we may get over any difficulty by using the word "approximately," though I know that will be practically of little use. I know what "approximately" means in some of these returns. Probably the Minister will agree to that.

The Minister for Mines: That is what we will have to do.

Question put and passed.

PAPERS—RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) had given notice to move—

"That all papers relating to the appointment of, and the instructions given to, the officer who superintended the test in connection with the construction of the A. J. brake vans at the State Works, Midland Junction, this officer's report, and all subsequent comments or criticisms up to date, be laid on the table."

He said: I have no desire to move this

motion, but with permission I would like to make a slight explanation in connection with it. In conversation with the Minister for Railways and later with the Acting Commissioner of Railways, I found that if I had these papers laid on the table certain departmental information would be made public that it would be very undesirable public contractors should know. It was information in regard to the departmental methods of making up tenders, etcetera. To take these papers off the file would possibly cause some misunderstanding, so I have agreed to the suggestion made by the Acting Commissioner of Railways, that I should peruse the files and take that portion I desire to get, at the same time not making public that portion which it is undesirable should be made public.

Mr. JOHNSON (referring to other papers) said : On my motion a resolution was carried on the 1st August in connection with tenders dealing with additional railway carriages. The Minister agreed to my motion and it was carried ; but I find exactly the same position in connection with those papers, and I say now that I have no desire that these papers be laid on the table as I can peruse them privately, and thus we shall not make known those matters it is absolutely undesirable to have made public.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory) : I presume that after the public utterance of the hon. member to the effect that the papers already ordered to be laid on the table will not be wanted, it will not be necessary for me to bring them here. I take it the House is satisfied.

MOTION — PASTORAL INDUSTRY, TO INQUIRE GENERALLY.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) moved—

"That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the best methods that could be adopted by Parliament to assist the pastoralists in the North-West, and at the same time protect the interests of the general consumers."

He said : I am influenced in moving this motion because from what I have read and from the discussions I have listened to in connection with our North-West I am satisfied that Parliament needs considerably more information than we have had to date to enable us to take an intelligent view of what is necessary in order to assist our pastoralists in the North-West. When I was first preparing the motion I was going to make it apply to the establishment of freezing works in the North-West ; but after a little more consideration I came to the conclusion that it would be desirable to make the motion a little broader in order that we might have an inquiry into other matters affecting both the pastoralists in the North-West and the consumers in and around the metropolitan area, and in other parts of the State.

The Minister for Mines: Kimberley is in the North. You can hardly call it the North-West.

Mr. JOHNSON : Why I want an inquiry in connection with one phase of this North-West question, the establishment of freezing works, is that I realise the great difficulty of dealing with that great question. I differ I think from most hon. members of this House, and from my point of view the position is that we have in the North-West a large tract of country owned — practically owned, because they have it on extensive lease—by certain pastoralists. Those pastoralists have a considerable amount of stock, great herds of cattle, and if we were to adopt the suggestion of certain members that State freezing works should be established in the North-West, we would possibly be placed in the position that large pastoralists in the North-West might decline absolutely to utilise or patronise those works. We would then be confined to the holders of small herds, and consequently there would be a danger of the State works being a financial failure owing to the fact that large owners would not patronise them. Then possibly the large owners would establish other works : and considering they have such a hold on the area and such large herds, they could make a success of their works to the detriment of the State works. There is

another side to the question. If we do not take any action as a State, there is the possibility that those large holders who have practically a monopoly and are recognised as a ring in connection with the meat trade—or were so recognised a few months ago, for I believe a change has come on the scene of late—if allowed to establish works of their own would then have a greater monopoly of the meat trade than they have to-day, because they could establish their own works and make their own conditions, and those conditions would be such as to exclude the possibility of the small holders utilising the works at all.

Hon. F. H. Piesse : Then you are in favour of the Government proposal?

Mr. JOHNSON : I am coming to that. We have to look at this question from two points of view. The first is that if we establish State freezing works, there is a liability that we may be protecting the people who have a monopoly to-day, while if we do not do something as a State, we may create a larger monopoly than is now existing and possibly do an injury to the small holders in that locality. The alternative is that we should do something as a State, to overcome the difficulty. The suggestion of the Government is that we should subsidise freezing works—to be erected possibly by these monopolists, the large holders; and unless the Government exercise extreme care, it is possible these people will obtain a monopoly by the very assistance of Government funds. I cannot go farther into this question. If I could go farther into it, I would not be justified in asking for an inquiry. It is because I cannot see far enough, because I do not know enough of this vast area, because I do not know its difficulties, that I want this inquiry. We are told that the difficulty is not in connection with the stock, but in connection with the shipping; that there is a shipping ring, and no meat ring at all; that the ship owners control the meat market of the metropolitan area. That is another phase of the question we know nothing about. You meet one man in the street who gives you one side of the question, and is prepared to prove there is a shipping ring

and that the shippers prevent the small holders from bringing stock to market unless it is favourable to the shippers. Then you meet another man in the street who is prepared to prove conclusively that only the week before he brought down stock and experienced no difficulty in shipping it.

Mr. Gordon : It is always the “man in the street,” I notice.

Mr. JOHNSON : There is so much difference of opinion that I feel we want an inquiry into this question. Then there is another side to this North-West question. Supposing I, as member for Guildford, bring forward a certain proposition. There is no doubt I will paint it as one of the brightest propositions that could be brought forward. But hon. members will discount my remarks, and possibly will make inquiries for themselves in Guildford to ascertain whether I have not over-estimated my case. The position is that in the case of Guildford, members can make inquiries on the spot and get the information for themselves; but we cannot make the inquiries or obtain the information we require in regard to the North-West—it is too far away. Members representing the North-West come here and make representations as to the possibilities of that vast area; and we probably discount their utterances, possibly unjustifiably. We say they are interested parties, and consequently we have to make a certain allowance, while at the same time possibly we are not justified in making those allowances. While members are in a position to justify themselves by inquiry in places within a given area of Parliament House, say in most parts of the State except the North-West, we are absolutely precluded from making inquiries in regard to the North-West.

The Treasurer : Are you going to the North-West for a trip?

Mr. JOHNSON : No; but my point is that we can get information from those people interested in the North-West and who thoroughly understand that part of the State, if we have this inquiry by a committee; information which hon. members are not in a position to get for themselves. I cannot possibly get this

information unless we have a committee ; therefore, I say, let us have a committee and thus obtain information which we cannot possibly secure as private members. Members may ask why do I not let the Government take the responsibility of their proposal ? I am satisfied to let the Government take the responsibility for measures that will not do harm to the people. But this is a big question that affects the consumers ; and to protect the consumers I think it necessary to have an inquiry by Parliament, so that Parliament may get information for itself to enable members to come to a conclusion as to the best means of assisting pastoralists in the North-West, and at the same time protecting consumers on the goldfields and the coast. I trust members will agree to the motion for the appointment of a committee, so that we may thoroughly investigate this matter.

Mr. W. J. BUTCHER (Gascoyne) : There is considerable justification for the hon. member in moving this motion ; and as I happen to represent one of the northern constituencies, I am probably in possession of a little more knowledge of the details than he. Probably if he had the amount of information which I or other representatives of northern constituencies could give, he would have had no necessity for moving this motion. However, in order that the hon. member may be in a position to obtain the knowledge, and to assist him in every way, it is my intention to support the motion. I should, however, like an independent inquiry to be made at which people from that part of the country should be called to give evidence on this question. Such inquiry would, I believe, result ultimately in the obtaining of information which members on this side of the House desire should be made available. I do not altogether approve of that portion of the motion which says that the hon. member's desire is "to assist the pastoralists." The pastoralists have never asked for assistance ; rather the other way about. It appears to me it is the Government who have asked the pastoralists to assist them in carrying out their policy in

connection with freezing works, which is a good suggestion indeed. I should like to give the House some information I have here which will go a good way towards confirming my remarks. From the Kimberley district alone we ship annually to the Fremantle market for consumption about 25,000 bullocks, an annual shipment ; on that there is a total loss in weight during transit, from the time of leaving port until the meat goes into consumption, of 100lbs. per beast, an estimated loss ; in some instances considerably over, in other instances probably not so much. That is a fair estimate of the actual loss ; and taking it at 3d. per lb., the average value at the port of shipment, the loss works out at 25s. per bullock ; that means on the 25,000 head shipped a total loss of £31,250 per annum on the actual shipments of bullocks to Fremantle from Kimberley. I would ask members, who is losing the amount ? It must be either the producer or the consumer ; and in either case we wish to prevent the loss. If the consumer is losing it, then it is our duty to prevent that ; or if the producer is the loser, it is equally our duty to endeavour to find a remedy. Apart from the loss occasioned by the waste between the port of shipment and Fremantle, there is also the loss of what is known by the slaughtermen as the "fifth quarter," the loss in treatment ; and that is exactly 10s. per beast. [Mr. Taylor : On the fifth quarter ?] That is the difference as between the value at the port of shipment and the value after treatment at Fremantle ; and it runs out, on 25,000 head of bullocks, at £12,500 lost annually in that direction —[Mr. Taylor : In addition to the £31,000 ?]—in addition to the £31,000. These figures show a considerable amount lost per annum to somebody, lost to the State, at any rate. Therefore we have to consider the question of either treating this meat in the Kimberleys by assisting the Government to carry out their policy of establishing freezing works in the North, or allowing this loss to go on as in the past, and to be borne either by the producer or the consumer. Probably the producer has to lose it, and the consumer has to pay for it. I will come

closer home, to the Gascoyne district—that is my constituency—from which we despatch to the Fremantle market for consumption 25,000 head of sheep annually. The average estimated loss on these is 5lbs. per head, which at 3d. per lb. amounts to a loss of 1s. 3d. per sheep; and at this rate the actual loss on a year's shipments is £1,562 10s.—practically lost to the producer or the consumer. I may use the same argument as in the former, as showing the large total loss to the producer or the consumer on shipments of stock from the Gascoyne. The object the Government had in view when they proposed to establish freezing works was to obviate those very severe losses, and to prevent the sending of a large number of stock overland to Queensland, as is now done for treatment there, in the absence of means of treatment here. I think this proposal of the Government is entirely justifiable; and if the information which the mover hopes to get by this inquiry will enable him and members on the other side of the House to support the proposal, I think it desirable to do everything we can to enable those members to get that information. In these circumstances, I support the motion.

MR. A. MALE (Kimberley) : As one of the representatives of the northern districts, it affords me great pleasure to find such a motion as this before the House, particularly coming from the Opposition side. It is rather unusual for members on that side to come forward with a proposal for a select committee with the object of endeavouring to do something to assist the squatters. In fact, it is somewhat surprising to hear of either side of the House wishing to assist the squatter. It affords me great pleasure to think that such a motion has come before the House. In connection with this motion I would point out the fact that it would be necessary to strike out the words "North-West" because the North-West only applies to certain districts in the North. The Kimberleys are in the north-east. If we strike out "North-West" we should allow the motion to apply to assisting the pastoralists of the State generally

and not confine the motion to any one district. The question of freezing works which has been raised in connection with this question applies not only to the districts in the far north, but also to the districts in the south-west, or I hope it will. The districts in the south-west and south-east within a very few years should be producing enough sheep to work up a big export trade. There is undoubtedly a great deal of misunderstanding in connection with the pastoral industry in the North. We hear a lot about meat rings and monopolies, and we hear, in connection with the same thing, of shipping monopolies. I would point out that the member for Kanowna, in his speech on the Address-in-Reply, referred to a letter which he had received from the North, which undoubtedly was very misleading. It referred to the fact that one firm, Forrest, Emanuel, & Co. controlled the whole of the meat trade down here. [*Mr. Bath* : Three firms.] It also referred to the fact that three firms controlled the whole of the meat trade at the same time as they also controlled the shipping of the stock from the North, and that not a single head of stock had been shipped from the North by others than those three firms. That was grossly wrong, because as a matter of fact these three firms only ship in chartered boats, which they charter themselves, and there are still the coastal boats free for the small owners. Every time these ships come down they are loaded with stock independent of these three firms; therefore there is a great misunderstanding in connection with the whole question. I think a select committee on the question would tend to throw some light on the present position of affairs and possibly do much good. I shall have much pleasure in supporting the motion, and I trust if the committee be appointed they will go through the work quickly so that no time will be lost in regard to the assistance of freezing works in the north or south, or wherever they are to be.

THE PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) : The Government have no desire to oppose the motion, but I desire to move an amendment which I trust will meet with

the approval of the proposer. I move—

"That the words 'North-West' be deleted, and the words 'of the State' be inserted in lieu."

This will give an opportunity to a committee to consider the whole question; because it is necessary that in taking into consideration the providing of facilities in the form of freezing works, they should also give attention to other matters which have a bearing on the pastoral industry. The member for Gascoyne has referred to the fact that pastoralists have not asked for anything from the Government. I think they are fairly consistent in their demands and the Government have responded fairly liberally. Bores have been put down in various parts of the State, which are of great value to the pastoralist, and we are now making preparations for opening up the stock route recently traversed by Mr. Canning, and as soon as the plans are completed it is the intention of the Government to appoint Mr. Canning in charge of the party which will be instructed to open up this route and put down wells on the road recently traversed by Mr. Canning.

Mr. Bolton: The rabbit-proof fence is for the pastoralists.

The PREMIER: Yes; that is another point. If the committee take the rabbit-proof fence into consideration, I hope they will not ask for another large expenditure to protect the pastoralists in the North. There has been a suggestion made that a rabbit-proof fence should be constructed from where the present fence joins the coast line, and it is suggested that a fence should be constructed running due east from that part of the coast. I hope the committee will not touch on that particular feature. A member says the pastoralists put down their own bores. It may be well for the select committee to call the member for Murray (Mr. J. P. McLarty) as a witness, and he may be able to show what enterprising settlers are prepared to do. In addition to that, we are improving the shipping facilities at the various ports of the North-West with a view to assisting the pastoralist. I would like members to disabuse their minds as to the granting of a subsidy. The proposed

assistance is not a subsidy, but a loan. The Government are prepared to grant a loan to these people, which is very different from a subsidy. The practice adopted in Queensland under the Assistance for Dairy Produce Act is that the State is divided into four or five different districts; a stock tax is imposed and a fund created, from which fund the various districts are advanced a certain amount, pound for pound what they put down. In the case of Western Australia we have no such fund available, and if we went on the same lines as Queensland it would be a considerable number of years before a sufficient sum of money would be raised in that way; therefore we have adopted this method of loaning money to these people, pound for pound up to £35,000. But the conditions under which the amount will be granted will be that these people shall be prepared to treat cattle at the same price, whether for wholesale or retail customers. The Minister in charge of the Agricultural Department is making that very clear; but up to date no definite arrangement has been made and we would be perfectly willing for the committee to advise the Government as to the conditions under which the works should be established. The primary object of establishing freezing works is to prevent what is going on at the present time, stock being taken across the north of Australia and treated at Queensland works. We feel it our duty to do all we possibly can to prevent that being done. At the same time I hope the committee will endeavour to report to the House as promptly as possible, so that there will be no delay of the question. At the same time, if my amendment is carried, it will enable the committee to make inquiries as to what is being done at present to encourage the stock raisers in the southern portions of the State. The Government at the present time have devoted £15,000, portion of which has been handed to the Minister for Agriculture to expend in the purchase of dairy cows, with the idea of encouraging the dairying industry. We have also arranged quite recently for a dairy expert from New Zealand. A gentleman who has had a large experi-

ence in New Zealand in regard to the dairying industry is now in the southern portion of the State with a view of educating the farmers in regard to the dairying industry. The Government do not propose to oppose the motion, but I trust the hon. member will accept the amendment which I have moved.

Mr. JOHNSON (mover): I have no objection to the motion being altered in the way indicated.

Mr. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Pilbarra): I support the amendment. I believe much good can be done by getting a thorough knowledge of the circumstances existing in the pastoral industry of the State, and I would just like to remark for the information of the member for Kimberley (Mr. A. Male) that this side of the House claims to take a sensible interest in all industries; and his surprise can only arise from a heavy course of study of anti-socialistic literature. I would recommend him to study a little later literature, and he will find that this side of the House is just as well able to represent the pastoralist as the navy. I spoke on this matter on the Address-in-Reply, and stated that the shipping freights were monopolised in connection with Kimberley, and several members interjected "the shipping ring." The facts as far as I can remember are these: The big pastoralists—three firms in fact in the Kimberleys—have monopolised all the cattle boat freights running to these ports. It may be information to members to know that these cattle boats are not the ordinary coastal trading vessels, but they run directly to Kimberley, load cattle and run back to Fremantle. In these boats the freights are monopolised by the three big firms in the Kimberleys. As to the amount of country held by the big firms, this applies also to Kimberley, and I would like to inform the House, and the committee will inform the House later no doubt, that there is a great area of country outside Kimberley in the district which I represent, also in the Roebourne and Gascoyne districts. There are immense

areas of pastoral country, most of which is said to be held by small squatters. The only big firm having a grip in that country is Dalgety and Company, and most of their stations are disposed of again as soon as possible. There are one or two other matters besides the freezing works which may be inquired into and one is the rabbit-proof fence; whether it is advisable to construct a fence to protect Kimberley or pull the present fence down. The present fence certainly is driving the rabbits into Kimberley, and it would be better to pull it down if the Kimberley people cannot be protected. Another matter that could be inquired into is the question of the destruction of dingoes. I am convinced this is a matter the Government could certainly do a great deal of good in regard to, without any extra expenditure to that which we have at the present time. I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): I take it that the hon. member for Guildford has brought this matter before the House primarily because he thinks that the case for freezing works at Wyndham requires investigation. I take it that he had no preconceived opinion on the question but is approaching it with an open mind. I am also pleased that the member for Pilbarra, in referring to this matter, evidently looked upon it as a fair question for investigation, and one upon which he is not justified, at all events at the present moment, in arriving at an adverse conclusion upon. This is a very pleasant change in the ideas of the members on the other side of the House; and it is just as well that the "t's" should be crossed and the "i's" dotted on such an occasion, as for some weeks past this question of freezing works has been a point of most virulent attack by the other side of the House against the Government. What do we find to-day? The hon. members opposite think that a fair case for inquiry is being made out. [Mr. Taylor: No.] It is evident from the speeches of the member for Guildford and Pilbarra that that is their

opinion at all events. I trust that when they next come before the public they will not neglect to point this out. The member for Guildford still speaks of this expenditure as a subsidy to pastoralists. It has been definitely and plainly stated and fully explained that it is in the nature of a loan and not in the nature of a subsidy. I think it is just as well, after the change that seems to have come over the other side, that definite notice should be drawn to their conduct.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): Before this question is decided, I would point out to the Minister who has just spoken that, so far as I am concerned as a member, there has been no case made out for even an inquiry. All the investigation that can be made will not justify the Government in loaning or subsidising the meat ring—as I suppose I am justified in calling it—the people who have been running this State for so many years in that particular industry. [Mr. McLarty: How about New Zealand?] New Zealand is a country that will not admit of rings the same as Western Australia has done. There is no section of the community there who hold the consumers in the palms of their hands like a certain section do in Western Australia, at all events in connection with the meat industry. [Mr. Gordon: Give us some facts as to the ring.] They are in the report, if the hon. member will read it, which was submitted to this House by a committee appointed in August, 1901, to consider this very question. The then member for Boulder (Mr. J. M. Hopkins) was the mover of the motion, and the report of that committee was presented to the House. I venture to say that the report compares more than favourably with any report submitted to the Chamber since I have been a member; and there has been no action taken on it, other than the recommendations with regard to the proposed stock routes. In August 1901 the committee was appointed on the following motion:—

“That a select committee be appointed for the purpose of fully considering and recommending to this House

the best ways and means by which people of this State can be provided, at a reasonable price, with a regular and wholesome supply of beef, and mutton either fresh, chilled, or frozen.”

The report of the committee showed very lucidly the true position of affairs. The evidence was taken of persons not only from this State but also from various parts of the Commonwealth and even New Zealand. With regard to the latter country, a Mr. Boyes was examined, and his statement is contained in the papers attached to the report of the committee. Evidence was obtained by letter from the Queensland Stock Raisers' Association.

Mr. Gordon: There is nothing in the report about the meat ring.

Mr. TAYLOR: I want to tell the hon. member that the members of the meat ring were examined by the committee, and that he will find their evidence in the report.

Mr. Gordon: Did they tell you that they were members of a meat ring?

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not know how the hon. member who so readily interjects this session will be able to account for his dead silence last session.

Mr. Gordon: On a point of order, has that got anything to do with the present motion? On a farther point of order, since the hon. member is quoting the motion, let him turn up some portions of the report where there is mention of the meat ring.

Mr. Speaker: There is no point of order.

Mr. TAYLOR: I did not say there was any evidence in this report to warrant the statement I made with reference to the meat ring. There is no evidence required on that point, for it is known to the whole population of Western Australia. When that population numbered 150,000 souls it was known, and to-day it numbers 250,000 and it is still known by all. They know it only too well, for it has been brought home through their pockets, and through their families being stinted in their meat supplies. The strongest thing that can be said would not be half so convincing as the want of food in the houses of the workers of this

country on account of the meat ring. I commend that to the hon. member for Canning. So far as this report is concerned, I think that it will go sufficiently far in covering the grounds desired by the hon. member for Guildford in his motion to-day. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher) was a member of that committee, and his knowledge of the pastoral pursuits in this State was of very great value to the committee. He then pointed out where the committee could get evidence dealing specifically with the subject mentioned in the resolution passed by Parliament, and there is no need to trouble again to secure evidence as to the cost of mutton, pork, beef, etc., not only in Western Australia but also in the other States of the Commonwealth, and even in New Zealand. There are recommendations in this report from that committee to the Government as to how meat could be cheapened. I do not desire to read the report, but I think it would be a wise thing if it were read to the House. It is idle to incur farther expense by appointing another committee of a similar character. If the statement of the member for Gascoyne is correct as to the quantity of bullocks shipped from the North-West, and the details concerning their shipment, it is quite evident that the loss per head in weight amounts to about 100lbs. on the journey. We know what that is worth. We have full evidence on that and other points from the pastoralists of the North-West, and also from drovers whom we examined with regard to the question. Then there was evidence given as to the loss on sheep before they reached market. The whole of the evidence on this question is before the House in the report of the select committee, and we do not need to go any farther than that. The suggested remedy has already been decided upon, but unfortunately not acted upon. I do not think anything will justify this Government or any other Government in loaning £35,000 to the cattle kings of this country, who have made their money by starving the people, by charging exorbitant prices, and by putting the food supply out of the people's reach. They are well able them-

selves to establish these freezing works if they are required, without the Government giving them a greater grip, a greater power, over the consumers of this State. I have no desire to make farther remarks on the proposition of the Government as to the freezing works; but I will have an opportunity when that measure comes before the House to denounce it in the strongest possible terms, and I hope the House will not support the Government in that scheme.

MR. SPEAKER: That is not the point before the House.

MR. TAYLOR: I will deal no farther with the question of freezing works. Reference to these works is not perhaps in the actual wording of the motion; but those who listened to the mover of it will recognise that in every sentence he uttered, reference was in reality made to the scheme, and that in his opinion it was necessary for the better guidance of this Chamber that we should have farther information with regard to the proposal. That being so I think I was justified in dealing with the proposition to some extent. I believe we have sufficient information in connection with the meat supply of this State without going to any farther expense to collect more. I was a member of the committee in 1901, and am perfectly satisfied that the whole area has been covered. I will tell the hon. member for Guildford that I do not think the operation of his proposal will carry as far as the resolution which the then member for Boulder moved in 1901. Great trouble was entailed in collecting evidence, and in thoroughly dealing with the matter. We were inquiring into the great question of the food supply of this State, and it will readily appeal to the House that in doing so it was necessary to probe to the bottom the condition of the food supplies, not only of our own State, but also of every State in the Commonwealth. And farther, we inquired from New Zealand witnesses as to how they cheapened their meat supply and dealt with surplus stock. Everything is contained in the report I have been discussing, and I believe the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) will not allow the House to

understand that a case has been made out to his satisfaction for the proposed loan of £35,000 for freezing works.

Mr. SPEAKER : I wish to remind the hon. member that this is not the question before the House. I hope he will not again repeat the argument. It has a bearing on the question, but it has been frequently repeated.

Mr. TAYLOR : I wish to point out that the member for Guildford moved this motion with the object of supplying information to the House to enable us to deal more intelligently with the freezing works proposition. The whole of the Premier's argument hinged on the loan to the meat combine. The Minister for Works did nothing but dilate on the question whether the grant would be a subsidy or a loan, and said it was no subsidy but a loan. Yet because I refer to the same thing, my statement is objectionable. I know the meat ring in this country does not like anybody to mention the matter. I know the proposal is objectionable ; it is objectionable to me, and doubly objectionable when I think of the hardships people have suffered from that ring. That is what makes it objectionable. I am justified in referring to this proposition, as every member on the Government side who has preceded me in this debate has referred to it. I still say I am not disposed to support the motion, for we already have the information. We have information covering a larger area than the motion covers. That being so, it is idle farther to tax the patience of members as to a select committee, and to incur additional expense to secure information we have already secured and embodied in the Votes and Proceedings for 1901. I resent the statement of the Minister for Works that a case has been made out to justify the Government's action in proposing to place in the hands of the meat monopolists of this State greater power than they now enjoy over the people.

Mr. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle) : The remarks of the Minister for Works (Hon. J. Price) render it necessary for me to make my position fairly clear. He complimented the members

for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) and Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) for moving and supporting this motion, which advocates the best methods that can be adopted by Parliament to assist the pastoralists—according to the amendment, the pastoralists throughout the State. I do not wish to touch more fully than I can help on the question of the freezing-works ; but it has entered into the discussion, and I have reason to speak of it because I am in exactly the same position as the members for Pilbarra and Guildford. I intend to support the motion, but am entirely opposed to the construction of the freezing-works. Surely it will not be claimed for me, as for those two members, that I have now turned round and supported the Government proposal ? I am as bitterly opposed to that as ever ; but I believe that in order to enlighten those who require enlightenment it is desirable to appoint a committee to gain information. Because of that, surely it is not claimed that I am favouring the Government proposal ? As to the best methods of assisting the pastoralists, my idea is that proper Government abattoirs should be erected at Fremantle. [*Mr. Butcher : Why not at York ?*] I am bound to say Fremantle, and not York. I believe it would be as reasonable to afford assistance by subsidising boats to bring the cattle south, instead of subsidising the owners to kill the cattle in the North and thus force a large proportion of chilled meat on the people in the metropolitan district. [*Mr. Angwin : They would not eat it.*] I agree with the interjection. If the freezing works are erected, most of the meat that comes south, if not all, will be chilled meat ; and it will then be almost forced on the people in the metropolitan area. Then it will not be so easy to get fresh meat as now ; whereas, if the Government subsidise steamers, or even run their own steamers to bring stock to the South before killing, and if proper abattoirs are erected, and sheds where the carcasses can be hung and properly graded and sold, there will be less difficulty about the meat supply and about the meat ring. If we wish to assist the

pastoralists, it is far better to spend £35,000 in the erection of up-to-date abattoirs in the South; and I mention Fremantle only because it is the nearest port, and the port where the largest population is centered. The abattoirs will have to be near Fremantle, and the £35,000 will be far better spent on abattoirs than as a loan to the pastoralists to enable them to erect their freezing works to treat live stock. And I ask, what sort of inspection of meat will there be in the North-West? Why, it is bad enough in all conscience at Robb's Jetty, close to Fremantle. It is worse perhaps in many other places. How can the Government expect proper meat inspection if they allow these freezing works to be erected in the North-West? It is impossible; and I use the word "impossible" because it is practically proved that proper inspection has not taken place up to date in centres where it is possible to have proper inspection. Then how can it be reasonable to expect proper inspection in the North-West? My opinion is, we should assist the pastoralists far better, more especially small pastoralists, those for whom the Government feel so kindly, by subsidising steamers to bring stock to the South while alive. The member for Gascoyne refers to the average loss of 100 pounds weight per beast in course of transit. I have not the slightest intention of disputing his statement. He should know the facts, and I believe what he says is correct. That, I admit, is a difficulty which will have to be overcome. But is saving 100 pounds live weight per beast to be the only argument advanced for the freezing works? If we agree with the hon. member that the freezing works will save 100 pounds owing to the cattle being slaughtered in the North, then I say, what about the consumer who demands fresh meat and not chilled meat? [Mr. Butcher: Chilled meat is the same as fresh.] It may be practically the same, but surely the producers must cater for the consumers; and if the consumers demand fresh meat, I say it is not the same to have chilled meat. There will be a certain proportion of fresh meat demanded, and there must

be a certain supply. My reason for supporting the motion is that very likely the committee will find out a better way of assisting the pastoralists than is to be found in the Government proposition. I believe, if it can be shown by evidence that it is better for the Government to assist the pastoralists in the manner I have mentioned, then, notwithstanding the Government seem wedded to the proposal, they will carry out the suggestions of the committee. I support the motion.

The TREASURER: (Hon. Frank Wilson): This proposal is fraught with such advantage to the whole State that I was pleased to hear the Premier say he does not intend to oppose the motion. The problem of the export of our cattle and sheep, in addition to cheapening, if possible, the price of meat to the consumers within our own boundaries, is full of such great possibilities that it behoves every member to approach the matter carefully, and to welcome every means of procuring additional information. For that reason alone I welcome the fullest inquiry, and the Government will be pleased if the select committee can at a reasonable cost provide such information as will assist Ministers to go in the right direction. This problem is to my mind of equal importance with the establishment in our State of a dairying industry. We have heard from time to time of the great possibilities of that industry, and the Government are now anxious to take the right course in order that the country may benefit by the establishment of such industries within our boundaries. One aspect has not been mentioned to-night, and it is one into which the select committee may well inquire. Not only should we endeavour to cheapen our local supplies, but to open up a big export trade; and in that respect the position is very considerably altered from the position when the select committee to which the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) refers considered the question of cheap food for the people of Western Australia. Since that committee sat six years have elapsed, and in glancing through

the report I cannot find any special reference to meat rings, although the hon. member, one of the committee, came to the conclusion, and no doubt justly from the evidence before him, that the meat trade at that day was in the hands of one or two firms only. The position has not very much altered since, until quite recently, when we find another large and powerful firm entering into competition; and we want that competition.

Mr. Bath: To which firm do you refer?

The TREASURER: To the new butchering firm now supplying meat in Perth and on the goldfields.

Mr. Daglish: Another competing firm started previously, and afterwards joined the ring.

Mr. Bath: Copley started in the wholesale line in opposition to the ring, but afterwards joined.

The TREASURER: That may be; these are possibilities; but in the meantime we get the advantage of the competition, though in this instance it is just possible that the new firm may join forces to complete the ring and to keep up prices, yet in the meantime there is this competition, of which the people receive the benefit.

Mr. Heitmann: How?

The TREASURER: By lower prices.

Mr. Heitmann: You cannot get meat any cheaper in Perth than it was a few months ago.

The TREASURER: I beg pardon. I am buying meat for my household at a penny or twopence a pound cheaper than I bought it a few months ago; and I am sorry if the hon. member is not taking advantage of the competition. I wish to point out that the position has altered to the extent that whereas six years ago we were concerned more particularly with cheapening the food of our people—and that is still, I admit, an all-important point—we are now particularly concerned with opening up a market outside our own country. During my recent travels I was particularly impressed with the enormous demand in the Far East, from the masses of the people there, who are learning year by year to consume food to which they had previously been strangers. I found that

staple articles of food such as fish and rice were rapidly giving way to fresh meat and flour; and the demand for these is one of which the Eastern States are not slow to take advantage. And we should be indeed foolish if we were to sit still and allow others to take the trade which is awaiting us but a few days' journey from our doors, and of which we are justly entitled to a fair share. The object of the Government is to see that we get a fair share of that trade; and to show that it is possible I may mention that a little flour mill in which I am interested has orders, since I made that journey, for 1,400 tons of flour to be exported to the Malay Peninsula and to China. Members may say the gain from that is personal. Nothing of the sort. That little order alone means some £12,000 in cash coming from foreign countries into Western Australia to buy the farmers' wheat and pay for its gristing and export. Everything that we can do to extend our markets, so that our industries established here and those that we shall establish may receive a legitimate share of the trade of the outside world, will bring prosperity to our country and increase the avenues of employment for our workers. It has been said that it is the intention of the Government, or at any rate that there is a suggestion, to grant a loan for the establishment of freezing works which would have a tendency to assist the pastoralists. Members have not said straight out that the Government were merely intending to assist the big cattle raisers, but I may say that we have no such intention. We do not take into consideration the large pastoralist at all. What we do want to do is to get a share of the outside trade for our increasing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep so that we may send them out to the world's markets and reap the benefit that must come to our country thereby. If there are large pastoralists, and I believe there are, in fact I know there are, who have been controlling the trade in the past to some extent, will the establishment of freezing works help them to still farther control that trade? The member for Guildford made it pretty clear that that is not so, from

his point of view, and I agree with him. By the establishment of freezing works, if we have some control over them, we shall be in a better position to assist the small pastoralist than if we refrain from establishing works at all, or left it to the big men to establish them themselves. The same thing applies to the shipping. Certain firms have controlled ships in the past, and the member for Pilbarra has referred to the fact that those firms who had chartered vessels made the first claim on the spaces in those vessels, or, I think he said, refused to carry the cattle for the small stock holders. Whether there are firms large or small, if they have steamers it is only natural that they will first of all supply their own wants before offering spaces in their own vessels to others. That is only business. The only way to get over that is to establish works which can freeze cheaply the meat at certain ports until owners can get sufficient tonnage to carry the meat to the southern markets or the foreign markets of the world. If the small stock growers have works to which they can send their cattle, and their cattle will be treated there under the conditions which will be laid down, and they can store their meat after it has been killed and prepared until arrangements are made for tonnage, then members can see what an impetus will be given to the trade at once. Certainly it will have the effect of preventing the exodus of cattle across the Northern Territory into Queensland, which is going on to a large extent and has been going on in the past. We must not forget this aspect of the question. Victoria is seizing the opportune moment to subsidise steamers to take up the trade to Java and Singapore, which I have referred to, and not only are they doing that but they are subsidising other lines and taking steps to secure a large proportion of the refrigerating space in the steamers already running. We should be slow indeed if we did not take similar steps so that the people here would have similar advantages when they are prepared to export. The work of the committee, when carried out on proper lines, will not overlap the inquiry which was made some six years ago. The com-

mittee need not go into a similar class of evidence, because they will have the evidence which was given before the previous committee before them, and they can enlarge the scope of the inquiry. Last time the inquiry was made as to cheap food supplies the report said that the supply available within the State under the present conditions was quite incapable of meeting the public wants. That state of affairs members must admit has passed away, and to-day we have a supply more than sufficient to meet the requirements, therefore it is conclusive that the work of the committee can go far beyond the work carried out six years ago. The committee can go into the question as to how it is best to open the markets of the Far East and the civilised world so as to get a share of the trade. Another aspect which appeals to one is the question of tick cattle which lose so much weight on the passage down from the North-West, and which results in such a large monetary loss to the country, because it stands to reason if cattle and sheep lose weight in travelling the consumer is going to pay an extra price to make up that loss. The establishment of freezing works such as suggested, and the provision of proper tonnage and refrigerating space to bring the meat to the local market as well as to export to the foreign markets will overcome that difficulty. Therefore that is worth inquiring into alone to save this £40,000 which has been referred to by the member for Gascoyne. I hope the House will endorse the motion of the member and will allow him to have a select committee. The Government welcome it, and we trust, as the Premier said and the Minister for Works has said, the report will be brought in expeditiously, so that no time will be lost in carrying out the policy of the Government which has been put before the country. There is a point which has been mentioned to me by one well versed in our pastoral industry which is deserving of consideration in this matter. This also is something I think which the committee might well inquire into. I understand, especially in the North-West districts, the country is not fully stocked. I am given to understand the country

would carry twice as many cattle and sheep as it does at the present time. The reason the pastoralists and stock growers have not fully stocked their holdings is that the facilities for getting their stock away in case of drought are not available. This refers more particularly to shipping. Apart from the question as to whether they have a scarcity of tonnage available, if you have a droughty season it stands to reason you cannot, at the time it is required, engage the necessary tonnage to get the herds and flocks away. But the establishment of freezing works would overcome that difficulty, and it is hoped by the Government that the establishment of freezing works at Wyndham will only be the forerunner of other works in the North-West portion of the State. If works are established there, it goes without saying that we should have closer settlement in our pastoral industry. We should have more cattle and sheep carried per mile or per acre, for the simple reason that if a disaster came in the shape of drought, the owners of the sheep and cattle would have the freezing works for putting their stock into cold storage, and get them away as shipping became available. I hope a select committee will be appointed and will take all these matters into consideration and that they will recognise that the question not only to be considered at the present time, although important, is cheap food to our people, but that in addition to that we want to get our fair share of the markets which we know are available to our producers in other countries. We do not want to assist any special pastoralist, we want all to prosper, the large and the small. It is useless to decry the statement made by the Government and say that we should not advance this £35,000 as we propose to do. It is useless to oppose that altogether because it is the only legitimate means of encouraging the small or the large stock owners to establish freezing works. The Government will welcome any suggestion even from a body of small stock growers. It is not only for large stock owners to take the opportunity offered by the Government, for I do not see why a dozen or

twenty small stock owners should not come to the Government and suggest the establishment of smaller works. We have mentioned the £35,000 for the simple reason that we were given to understand that works to properly carry out our object and treat the surplus of our herds within measurable distance of Wyndham would require an expenditure of about £70,000. That is the only reason that £35,000 has been mentioned in the Governor's Speech, and it has also been mentioned by myself and others as the amount we are prepared to advance. There is no reason why a number of small stock owners should not combine in order to put a proposal before the Government to erect freezing works or cool storage on a smaller scale than that, and I for one should be delighted if such a proposal could be brought forward from one of the more southern parts, such as Carnarvon, for freezing works commensurate with the great wants of that district. If such a proposal were put forward, say to cost £30,000, the Government would be prepared to consider it on the same basis as the larger works. When members realise that there is no such thing as subsidising, that it is only the intention of the Government to lend the money for the establishment of the works which otherwise would not be established, to lend the money on reasonable terms, to get over the initial expense, the initial time when it is hard to make works of this description pay their way by charging little or no interest for a year or two, members must agree that the suggestion is one worthy of the attention of the House and the Government. Our main object is to extend the operations of our pastoralists so that we may go on increasing our herds, and not only get the advantage in the increase of sheep and cattle but get the enormous advantage from the larger growth of wool, which is such a benefit to the pastoralist. I found that there was not only a demand for fresh meat in my travels in the early part of the year in the countries which I have referred to, but I also found that there was a great demand for wool springing up, and I

ascertained that buyers on behalf of Japan and China were already interesting themselves in the Eastern States for the purchase of wool, and I suggested to the Minister for Agriculture in Tokio that he might send buyers to Western Australia, that we were producing wool here equal to anything produced in the world, and that we should be glad to have a share of their trade. If we can only make the supply available to them and get the wool to their mills which are being established right throughout their land, we shall derive great profit. I hope that will be so. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

At 6.15, *the Speaker* left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. J. P. McLARTY (Murray): Many members, particularly on the other side of the House, oppose this motion, but are careful to tell us that their minds are made up and that any arguments advanced will not convince them. The debate seems to have drifted to the freezing works at Wyndham, and I shall confine my remarks to that aspect of the question. It is proposed to build them in East Kimberley. That is a tick-infested district and of course there is a heavy loss on cattle coming from the district, but this year about 19,000 head of cattle have been sent from the East Kimberley district to other States, and probably next year there will be 30,000, at all events there will be considerably more than went this year. Those cattle would not come to Fremantle in any case. I want to impress that on members, because the stock that comes to Fremantle now fully supplies the market, and the owners of the cattle are not such fools as to bring cattle to Fremantle where they would not be consumed. In addition to the number of bullocks mentioned, there are thousands of cattle in East Kimberley that are good enough for breeding purposes which the owners are speying. For the information of hon. members I may say that speying is an operation performed so that the cattle do not breed after, but become mud-fat. These cattle are not sent to Fremantle

or to the other States; but if we had freezing works at Wyndham they would be sent to the freezer, and the carcasses could be shipped to Asiatic ports or anywhere where a market would be opened up. There is another matter. Many West Kimberley sheep are allowed to grow old and die, but if we had freezing works at Wyndham they could be culled out and sent down to the freezing works. I do not know that I need labour the question very much, because I feel certain that if a turn of the political wheel brought members opposite to administer the affairs of this State, and they had the information the present Government have, they would not hesitate for one moment to establish freezing works at Wyndham. What do members want? I have already shown that these cattle that are now being driven to the other States would not come to Fremantle in any case. Do they want us to send double and treble the number to the other States and get them tinned there and sent back to us as prime Queensland or prime New South Wales beef? Is it not better for us to have the shipping in our own ports? Because it would take 10 vessels to send away the number of cattle frozen in one year, and this would be in addition to the labour it would employ. I happen to be one of those vagabond squatters, but I belong to West Kimberley, and it makes no difference to me whether they have freezing works in East Kimberley or not, because we send our cattle to Fremantle, and will continue to do so. After all, squatting is not a very grand game. Some years you can put the profit in a wine-glass or cover it with a gooseberry leaf. The squatters after all are only asking for a loan, and they are contributing £35,000. I think that is a handsome amount. The other portion will be only on loan, and will be returned to the State. I object to the way the motion is put—"assisting the pastoralists of the North-West." We never asked for assistance. Of course this will be helping us in some way, but we have not asked for it. I interjected when the Premier was speaking that the company I belong to are putting down their own bore. We got 80,000 gallons

in 24 hours and thought it sufficient, and then put down a second and got 140,000 gallons in 24 hours, and now we are putting down a third bore. We never asked the State for any help at all. In addition to that, we are paying a handsome amount by way of a voluntary tax towards the destruction of dogs. We have become large landholders by force of circumstances. When we first went to Kimberley we did not hold very much country. But if you have a stockman who leaves you and takes up a couple of hundred thousand acres on the margin of your land, it is a marvellous thing how he gets cattle and how they breed. They seem to have triplets every time, and the end of it is the squatter has to buy this man out. I am not bringing forward an imaginary case. We have had to buy three people out, the land amounting to about three-quarters of a million acres. So we have become large landholders whether we like it or not. Of course Mr. Canning's route will be of immense benefit; but the cattle now going to the other States will not come down by that route; they will still go to the other States, and cattle are increasing largely in Kimberley. In New Zealand they export every year about three million carcasses. The figures are 1,800,000 sheep and 1,200,000 lambs; and in New Zealand they are very anxious to establish freezing works wherever they are justified in any locality; and they start them without going about asking whether a few people have a few pounds in the bank or not, or whether they have land or not. They want to establish the industry. It seems to me that people talk about "cattle kings," without knowing them. I do not envy some of them. I knew Emanuels in Kimberley when they bore the heat and burden of the day. They must have spent £50,000 before they saw a copper back. And we know that Connor and Copley were not born with silver-spoons in their mouths. We should be pleased to see that they have got on as well as they have done. My land is in West Kimberley and not in East Kimberley, and I did not mean to speak on the motion, but to speak later when the proposal for freezing

works comes before the House. It seems to me now that a very narrow view is taken. It does not matter whether the capitalists want these works or not, there will be a great benefit to the State if anything of the kind arises. I am somewhat reminded of the man in Holy Writ Haman the Prime Minister, who had all honours and everything that a man could wish for, but there was an unfortunate poor Jew, and Haman, after enumerating all the honours he had received said "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." That seems to be the case with members opposite. Surely when I show, and the evidence will bring it out, that these cattle that are going to the other States will still go there if we do not have freezing works, and double the number, surely we will give consent to the establishment of freezing works in the North.

Mr. W. B. GORDON (Canning): I do not know whether any great benefit will be derived from a select committee. At the same time it is just possible that a committee may bring some information forward that would strengthen the Government, if they want any strengthening, in regard to the establishment of freezing works in the North. We have it from the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) that there was a meat ring. He did not know whether such a thing existed now, but retail prices of meat to-day are no less than they were 12 months ago. As a matter of fact, taking prices 12 months ago, they were less than they are to-day in spite of the competition that has taken place. We had it from the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) that according to a select committee of 1901 there was a meat ring, but the hon. member cannot give us any information that such a meat ring existed. It is only in his own mind. And members on the other side maintain that there is a meat ring, but they cannot place their fingers in it. The probabilities are that this select committee may enlighten us on the subject. The member for Kimberley has put forward a very good case, and the member for Gascoyne

also put forward a good case, though perhaps he was unfortunate in saying that the pastoralists in the North seek nothing. Seeing that the whole of the rents the pastoralists pay do not amount to the cost of the upkeep of the rabbit-proof fence. I think he might have given the Government credit for this large expenditure; and I hardly thought a remark of that kind would come from a representative of the squatters. In his arguments in reference to the establishment of freezing works, he pointed out that there was a loss of the fifth quarter. Members of the Opposition who do not know what this is should be enlightened. The member for Gascoyne, in saying that through the establishment of the works we would gain 10s. a head on stock shipped from the North-West, really used an argument which was against the establishment of the freezing works. If that argument is to decide the question as to whether we are to have the works or not, it will be well for the position to be clearly placed before members. As I say, the establishment of these works would mean the loss of the fifth quarter, which comprises the head, tongue, shins, liver, heart, tail, and hide of a beast. The parts that will not be shipped are the heart, liver, shins, and head. To-day the people of Western Australia get these portions of the beast cheaply, but it will not pay to freeze them and bring them down to the metropolis. A certain number of these parts will be provided, but there will be a loss generally on the fifth quarter. That, however, is immaterial as compared with the benefits the State will derive from the establishment of the works. The member for Murray has put the question very clearly. The cattle are now going away from the State and this exodus will continue, for the squatters have their markets in other parts of the world. If we do not have the freezing works established there will be a continuation of the importation of frozen meat to the State; as a matter of fact, to-day if you ask a man whether he eats frozen meat he will say "no," but statistics show that for every fresh sheep that is eaten there are 10 frozen ones, that in every pound of chops one gets two chops of

frozen meat and one of fresh meat. There can be no monopoly in the meat trade as the price is commanded by the English and colonial markets. It is a sound argument to use that, if there were no meat trade in Western Australia, the price in Perth and Fremantle would be cheaper than it is now. To establish that argument I need only quote the London market prices which show that Australasian meat is sold there at 3½d. for beef and at 3½d. and 3¾d. for mutton. These are the London wholesale prices and, as compared with the wholesale prices here, they are very much below our figures. There is no keener competition in Western Australia than in the butchering trade. I have been engaged as a fat stock salesman for 17 years, and have practically made my living out of that business, and am therefore entitled to speak with some experience on this question. If I were to quote the financial operations of men engaged in the pastoral industry who have attempted to get hold of the retail meat business, losses of hundreds of thousands of pounds would be shown. [Mr. Underwood: The losses were caused because the ring beat them.] There are dozens of men engaged in the butchering business and, as a matter of fact, to-day if you go to any retail butcher he will tell you that he is not making money owing to the competition being so keen. The price of meat retailed in Perth to-day is cheaper than in the Melbourne market. How therefore can there possibly be a monopoly? This difference in price between the two States has existed for the past two years and especially as regards beef exhibited for sale in the windows. These facts cannot be disputed and one only has to get the price lists which are published in the *Australasian* and the *Queensland* and *New Zealand* papers to realise that the retail prices of meat in the other States are really higher than they are here.

Mr. A. J. WILSON (Forrest) : It seems to me that, with regard to this question, the squatting kings and pastoralists of the North have much to be thankful for owing to the sympathetic chord which is being struck in the Assembly

to-day as to the "squatocracy" in Western Australia. Here one finds hon. members who have so long been fighting the great and noble cause of democracy passing, or attempting to pass, a resolution the very forefront of which is in the interests of the pastoralists. The interests of the consuming public form but a secondary consideration. I appeal to hon. members who have any regard for the consuming public of this State to say which of these two interests is the greater and which should be put in the forefront of a resolution by a gentleman who claims to be a Labour member of this Parliament of Western Australia. What is the language of that resolution? [*Mr. Scaddan*: English.] It may be, but my friend from his personal experience knows that there is bad and good English. Is the object of the resolution primarily for the purpose of protecting the masses of the people in Western Australia, for the purpose of considering the democracy of this State? Certainly not. It is primarily for the purpose of considering the pastoral interests of this State. [*Mr. Underwood*: The combine.] Certainly we have heard about the meat combine. [*Mr. Scaddan*: And the Timber Combine.] A time will come when hon. members will doubtless be dealing with that question, and at the very first opportunity it will give me the greatest pleasure to show how some members were very solicitous for that combine. [*Mr. Scaddan*: Read the notes of your Address-in-Reply speech.] When I have to refer to any of these notes, the member for Ivanhoe will perhaps hear it too soon for his own liking or that of his party. I do not wish to be diverted from the motion, although some members may wish it. The proposal is that a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the best methods that can be adopted by Parliament to assist pastoralists in the North-West; then as a sort of afterthought, a most indifferent, lukewarm, callous consideration for the interests of the great consuming public, we have these words, "and at the same time protect the interests of the general consumers." I venture to think that, viewing this motion from a purely democratic standpoint, the

interests of the general consumers are a matter of greater moment, of much graver concern to this State, than are the interests of the paltry handful of pastoralists who are asking for nothing except that Divine Providence may be good enough to send them good seasons. If such is done they do not care whether this or any other Government gives them assistance or not. Is not that clearly the position so far as the pastoral industry not only in Western Australia but in the whole of Australia is concerned? All the pastoralists want is the assistance which a kindly Providence will confer on them by giving good seasons and they will look after the balance themselves. One might have expected from the conservative gentlemen who grace the benches on the other side of the House, that they, with their highly conservative natures, might have been clamouring for the interests of the great pastoralists of this country and have slight consideration for the interests of the general consumer; but when we find an hon. gentleman, who has for so long been fighting the battles of democracy, the battles of the masses of the people, putting the interests of the great majority of the people as a mere side issue while holding up in the forefront the necessity for giving consideration and assistance to the pastoralists, the cattle kings and the meat ring, the position can be described as nothing less than extraordinary.

Mr. Scaddan: You will drive the member for Guildford mad if you go on talking like this.

Mr. A. J. WILSON: One would naturally expect that the Government would not oppose the motion. Anyone who has heard the Government policy set forth knows that they claim to be willing to assist every industry in the State, and they have even been prepared to commit themselves to a policy of establishing freezing works in the interests of the pastoral industry. As to the wisdom of constructing these works, one has only to remember that if the pastoral industry is to be developed, it will require a wider range of markets than can be provided by the population of Western Australia for some years to come. The market as far as our own State is con-

cerned is naturally very limited, and being so the industry is likely also to remain limited as far as the raising of cattle is concerned unless farther markets are obtained. I venture to say that we have to look forward, as was done in New Zealand, to establishing a very large export trade in the future; and if this is done and other markets are discovered, the result will be a great extension of prosperity in regard to the pastoral industry in the North-West and in other portions of this State. If the object of the motion, as many members have mentioned, is to inquire into the existence of a meat ring, or the injustice being wreaked on the consuming public on the one hand and certain pastoralists on the other by a meat ring, why does not the motion state that in explicit terms, amongst a multitude of other things? If the object is to expose in the public interest the machinations of a meat ring, then why not be precise and explicit, and say so in so many words, and let us have an investigation into the effect of the meat ring on the public of this State? I venture to say the present position of the pastoralists appears to me very prosperous indeed. In almost every Governor's Speech at the opening of Parliament we hear references to the prosperity of our pastoral industry, and if one looks round there are evidences that our pastoralists are doing fairly well. There is no evidence of their clamouring for the removal of any injustice; no evidence of any objection by them which would form the slightest justification for the motion, and for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the matters detailed by the mover and other members. As to the consuming public, I venture to say that at no time in the history of Western Australia has the consumer been on so good a wicket as he occupies at the present day. At the same time, judging by the prices of meat in the metropolitan area at all events, a great reduction has recently been made, and the consumer has little indeed of which to complain. And I venture to say no consumer is complaining of the price of

meat in the metropolitan area. Moreover, there can be no doubt but that the price ruling in the metropolitan area must largely determine the prices which will rule in other portions of the State. [Mr. Heitmann: No; it is different on the goldfields.] If so, surely it will not be long before the same causes which produced the reduction in the metropolitan area will begin to work on the goldfields and other centres of population. But in any case, if we appoint a select committee to inquire into the existence of a meat ring, the effects of the meat ring, the effects of the shipping charges, the position of the small pastoralist in the North-West and other portions of the State, is the inquiry to be held in Perth, or will the committee, in order to secure the information, go to the centres where these injustices exist? If the committee sit in Perth the cattle kings will give evidence. The only witnesses available from a practical standpoint will be those interested in the alleged meat ring. The man who is suffering injustice away in the North-West, the small selector, will he come to Perth to give evidence? What means will the committee have of obtaining the evidence of the men in whose interests it is primarily urged that the committee should be appointed and the investigation made? Is there any means, unless the committee are prepared to visit those localities to obtain information on the spot? If that is to be done, or no matter how the information is obtained, it seems to me an indefinite period of time will be needed for the investigation; and when all is over it is questionable whether any good will result. Are we to take it by the adoption of this motion that the proposals of the Government and of the majority in this House in the interests of the pastoral industry are inadequate; that the Government do not propose doing enough, and that the select committee must call for persons and papers, take evidence, and tell the Government how much more should be done in the interests of the pastoral industry, at the same time incidentally and inferentially, not forgetting the consuming public? I can quite understand that the Government, who wish to foster the pastoral,

dairying and every other industry in the State, cannot reasonably oppose such a motion without having their motives most likely misunderstood, intentionally or unintentionally; and there is no doubt the motion will be carried. But I venture to predict that when the committee have collected the evidence and the report is brought in, there will be in the country a unanimous opinion that the whole thing has been a gross waste of public time and public money.

Mr. Johnson: I do not object to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. JOHNSON (in reply as mover): I do not wish to follow the arguments advanced by members, but I think the discussion to-night clearly proves the wisdom of a thorough inquiry into this proposition. I am not responsible for conclusions that members may form from the motion. For instance, the member for Fremantle (*Hon. J. Price*) states that because the motion has been moved it is practically an endorsement of the Government proposal to give the sum of £35,000 towards the establishment of a freezing industry. I do not know what the Minister wishes to convey, but he distinctly gave us to understand that by moving the motion I practically endorsed the Government proposal. [*The Minister for Works:* It showed that you had an open mind.] I trust I shall always have an open mind on all questions affecting the State. Again, I am not responsible for any conclusion the member for Forrest (*Mr. A. J. Wilson*) arrives at; and it was a remarkable argument of his that because I put the word "pastoralist" first and "consumer" second in the motion, I desired to give first consideration to the pastoralist and secondary consideration to the consumer. The hon. member jumped to this conclusion, and waxed eloquent on the motion, because I did not put the consumer first and the pastoralist second. I wish to combine both; I do not wish to injure the consumer or injure the pastoralist. My desire is to do the best I can for all interested in the motion. One point has been emphasised several times to-night:

the fact that a considerable number of stock is now being driven from the North-West to other portions of Australia. The member for Murray (*Mr. McLarty*) argued from this that the pastoralists have certain markets in the East or in other parts of Australia, and he went on to state that when we establish freezing works in the North-West the pastoralists will discontinue driving their cattle across the border as at present. That is only a matter of opinion; we cannot be satisfied of it; and consequently this is one phase of the question that the committee if appointed will have to investigate closely, to see whether we will secure the patronage of those squatters who are now using our territory to fill orders which they receive from Eastern Australia. I do not wish to labour the question any more; we have had a good debate; and I think the very debate justifies the passing of the motion.

Question (as amended) put and passed.

Ballot taken and a committee appointed, comprising *Mr. Butcher, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Male, Mr. Underwood*, with the mover.

Mr. JOHNSON farther moved—

That the committee have power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report this day four weeks.

The *PREMIER:* I would suggest to the chairman of the committee that in taking evidence, it should be in narrative form rather than the usual practice of reporting question and answer. From my experience, when the evidence is taken in question and answer, people do not go to the trouble of reading the whole of the evidence as printed, and this course entails much more printing and is altogether more costly. The Forestry Commission, of which I was a member, towards the end adopted the narrative form of evidence, and found it gave satisfaction and curtailed the printing bill to a large extent; and I shall be glad if the committee will take this matter into consideration. The evidence may be recorded in the form that police-court evidence is taken.

Mr. JOHNSON: I will endeavour to influence the committee in the direction indicated by the Premier.

Question passed.

MOTION—SLIDING SCALE AND ITS EFFECT, TO INQUIRE.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill) moved—

"That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the effect of the abolition of the Sliding Scale on the prices of those articles affected by its incidence while in operation."

He said: I do not think any member will be inclined to oppose this motion, in view of the important bearing that the reduction of the sliding scale, or its final abolition, has had on the financial position of Western Australia. As was pointed out by the Treasurer last night, the sliding scale has reduced the revenue derived from the Commonwealth by many thousands of pounds, and to a large extent has contributed, or to a very material degree has contributed to the present financial position of the State. In the course of some remarks which I made during the discussion on the Budget speech last session, I pointed out that if the loss of this sliding scale had been counterbalanced by the advantage gained by the consumers throughout Western Australia, there would be no reason to lament the gradual reduction of these duties; and I also pointed out at that time, from information I had received, that the consumers had to a very large extent benefited by the reduction of these special duties. In the course of some remarks made by the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), he was of the opinion that the middleman, the importer, had secured the major portion of the advantage.

Mr. Daglish: Or the Eastern manufacturers that had come in oversea.

Mr. BATH: Or that the Eastern manufacturers had secured a large advantage. The impression conveyed by the member for Subiaco was that the consumers of Western Australia had not benefited, or that if they had, it was only to a slight extent, from the loss of the sliding scale.

I may state that in making the remarks I did I was led to do so by conversations I have had with representatives of importing firms in Western Australia, who have assured me there has been a very considerable reduction in the price of those articles affected by the imposition of the sliding scale. There is one group of commodities, those dispensed over hotel bars and in clubs, for which there has been no reduction in price—spirituous and fermented liquors. But I would like to point out that the Government of Western Australia have benefited by reason of the fact that in December, 1905, they introduced an amending Licensing Act by which they increased the fees for licenses for certain classes of hotels in Western Australia; and one of the main reasons urged by the then Treasurer (Mr. Rason) for raising the fees in connection with these licenses was that the hotel-keepers in Western Australia had very materially benefited by the reduction in the duties on spirituous liquors.

The Minister for Mines: That has little to do with the sliding scale.

Mr. BATH: It has a great deal to do with the sliding scale, and the position is that by reason of that fact, the Government secured additional revenue by the increased charge they made for these licenses. I am satisfied of this, and I believe the great bulk of the population in Western Australia take the same view, that if the reduction of this sliding scale has been set off by a reduction in prices to the consumer, then the loss of that special impost has been a disadvantage to Western Australia, because the incidence of those duties pressed particularly hardly on a big proportion of the population in Western Australia who under the existing tariff were contributing a disproportionate amount to the revenue of the State from a very scanty source of income. [*The Premier:* You would not call these hotel-keepers consumers?] I am not dealing particularly with that; I am dealing with articles of food consumed by a big population in the metropolis and on the goldfields. I say that apart from the sliding scale they already pay a disproportionate share of the taxation

of this State, and that if for no other reason quite apart from any attitude on the part of the Commonwealth, if we are adjusting the sources of revenue in Western Australia it would have been the part of this Assembly in the interests of the consuming population, comprising the great bulk of the people of Western Australia, to see that this source of revenue, this sliding scale, should be dispensed with in order that a more equitable basis of taxation might be arranged, the incidence of which would press more justly on the population of Western Australia. I have moved this motion with a view to secure information to ascertain as accurately as we possibly can who has benefited by the loss of the sliding scale duties in Western Australia; and if we ascertain as the result of the investigations of this select committee that the consumers have not benefited, I say it will not be an argument that these duties should have been retained, but it will be an argument for the Government of this State to act upon the result of the investigations of the select committee, and to see whether they cannot bring some pressure to bear in order to prevent the importers, the middlemen of Western Australia, from securing the advantage of this reduction which should have been passed on to the consumers of this State. I do not think that it is necessary that I should support this motion at greater length, because the action of the Government and the attitude of the people of the State will depend more on the investigations of the select committee than on any discussion of this motion, and I think the argument will commend itself to the Treasurer and his colleagues, that it will be an advantage if the select committee is appointed and can secure this information in order that in the future discussion of our financial position we may have this information available.

The TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson) : The Leader of the Opposition has overlooked the fact that these select committees cost the State money ; but I would not so much oppose the motion

for the appointment of a committee if I could see any finality or any satisfactory information to be obtained that would assist the Government in the direction the hon. member indicates ; or if I could see, having got that information, that it was within the power of this House or the Government to bring pressure to bear so that the consumer the hon. member indicates might get the advantage of the abolition of the special tariff. It seems to me to be an interminable business the hon. member asks the Government to deal with. First of all I cannot recognise that it is possible by any amount of inquiry to absolutely locate who has received the advantage of the abolition of the sliding scale or State tariff. There are so many matters that affect the position that it will be impossible to complete the inquiry under several months. If the committee had to take evidence not only of all the business people, not only of the importers, but of the retailers and then the consumers, it would take several months ; and then evidence would need to be taken to show that other things have not come in to affect the position. For instance, the law of supply and demand comes in. We know that the law of supply and demand has affected the consumers notwithstanding the abolition of customs duties ; and I have seen the adverse position ; I have seen duties put on and prices come down ; because the law of supply and demand came in, there was more on the market than could be consumed, and there was a glut. So this inquiry, instead of lasting for a week or two at a small cost to the State, would perhaps land the State in very considerable expenditure. [*Mr. A. J. Wilson :* For what ?] Yes ; for what ? I cannot endorse that expenditure. I am sorry to say we are not in a position to expend hundreds of pounds on inquiries unless we can see some tangible result. Suppose we have all the information the hon. member can get, what good will it do ; what object can it have ? I cannot see where the State is going to benefit. Therefore I would be lacking in my duty in supporting the motion. We can legislate against rings and combines, but we cannot legislate against the mass of

traders, the general commercial community who are all affected and who are included in the general charge of preventing the consumer getting the benefit of the abolition of this tariff. I am sorry to have to take that view, but it will be impossible to do otherwise. First of all, we cannot attain the object the hon. member has in view. Secondly, if it were possible and we did obtain the information, we cannot take any action upon it. Therefore I must really ask the hon. member not to press the motion.

Mr. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): I recognise, like the Treasurer, the difficulty of an inquiry of this sort; but at the same time the proposition is one having a large degree of importance for the State, because the settlement of the question embodied in it means the determination whether the people of this State can afford at the present time to pay a larger amount in direct taxation to replace the indirect taxation that formerly was contributed. The question is whether somewhere about £200,000 that formerly was contributed is still being contributed or not; whether when it ceased to find its way into the State coffers it ceased to find its way out of the pockets of the people. I take it that the object of the hon. member in moving for the select committee is to achieve that end.

The Treasurer: What benefit will it have?

Mr. DAGLISH: It will enable the Treasurer very effectively to argue, if it be proved that this money remains annually in the pockets of the people—[*The Treasurer:* It does]—that the State can afford to pay what extra taxation he is now asking for.

The Treasurer: But whether it remains in the pockets of twenty people, a hundred people, a thousand people, or twenty thousand people does not matter.

Mr. DAGLISH: Undoubtedly it does. If the average man in this community is still contributing his share of the £200,000 and the State is not getting it, then that man is not possessed of the same capacity to pay increased taxation as otherwise he would be. And there is

a very important bearing on this question, and that is the fact that it will enable us to realise whether we have paid as high a price as some of us think we have for Federation or not, and the mere obtaining of that information is important no matter what members may think in regard to the result of Commonwealth legislation generally. It is important for this State to know precisely whether it has suffered as great a loss as is sometimes alleged on public platforms, and sometimes in this House. While the committee will have an enormous amount of work to do, the settlement of that one question, the extent to which this State has gained or lost by Federation in this one way, will be of greatest importance and greatest interest to the community as a whole. I can understand the opposition to the appointment of a select committee for dealing with some personal grievance or some fancied grievance that is important only to the individual who labours under it or who imagines he does; but a largely important question is deserving of reference to a select committee, and is worth in the information it should result in any expense that may be incurred. While realising the great amount of work that will be imposed upon the select committee I would like to see the inquiry go farther than the hon. member himself proposes, and that is to see the work of the committee extended by requiring it to ascertain, not only the effect of the abolition of the local tariff on the price of commodities, but also the effect of the loss of the local tariff on our local industries. That seems to me to be even a larger, more important, and more vital question to the State than the mere discovery of its effect upon the price of commodities, important as I admit that to be. The inquiry the hon. member aims at is in fact not complete, in my opinion, unless it does determine the effect of our loss of the local tariff upon our industries, not only on those which existed but its effect as a preventive of those which might have come into existence. While I realise that this would enormously increase the work of the select committee I believe that the result would amply repay any

expense the work of the committee may entail upon the State. Therefore, while supporting the Leader of the Opposition in his object, I move an amendment—

"That the words 'sliding scale' be struck out and 'local tariff' inserted in lieu, and that the following be added to the motion 'likewise the effect of its loss upon local industries.'"

I move the amendment with a view to making the inquiry more comprehensive than the hon. member has proposed; and I hope the Government will not resist the making of such an inquiry, because I believe it might even strengthen the hands of the Treasurer when negotiating with the Commonwealth authorities in regard to the adjustment of the method of returning the Commonwealth surplus revenue. At all events if it be proved by such inquiry first of all that the individuals composing this State have gained by a fall in the price of commodities, that no doubt will be satisfactory to them and to those who have always made the contention that the hon. member himself has made. And at the same time if it be proved as I would like, but which I do not anticipate, that there has been no adverse effect on our local industries from the loss of this local tariff, then the public, I am sure, would be highly satisfied with the result of the committee's investigation.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): The amendment entirely changes the original motion. The motion to my mind is academic in character, for it simply desires the appointment of a select committee for the purpose of trying to find out what the effect of the sliding scale would be. The Leader of the Opposition stated that his object is to try and advise the House through the medium of this committee where the general consumers have benefited by its abolition. The amendment, however, apparently is for the purpose of trying to find out the effect of the abolition of the sliding scale on our local industries. Supposing the select committee investigate and obtain information showing how our local industries have been affected, how are we going to act; what on earth

can we do? What is to assist these local industries? We know perfectly well that all power through the customs is under the control of the Federal Government; we have no power in connection with these matters. No matter what report is brought forward showing the effect of the abolition of the sliding scale, we are quite powerless in the matter. I cannot see that any advantage is going to arise as far as we are concerned. Even if we had a select committee and found that, owing to the abolition of the sliding scale, the profits thereby went into the hands of the middlemen instead of into the pockets of the consumers, what action could be taken to prevent the advantages from the abolition of this scale going in that direction? I cannot see that any benefit would result from the committee. If it could be shown to us that by the adoption either of the resolution or the amendment any good could be done, I would then be only too pleased to support it. But we must remember that a select committee means expenditure, and unless it can be shown that some good is likely to result, I really think that such an appointment should be opposed. If it could be shown that we would have power to take action, that we could impose some taxation, and if the report of the committee was to the effect that the profits due to the sliding scale were going into the pockets of the general consumer, then the position might be different. But are we to assume that the object of the committee is, if there is such a finding, to be able to impose taxation on people so that they will give back to the State the advantages they are receiving? I do not think that is the object of the motion, and I do not think that such a finding would be made by the committee. No advantage would accrue by the passage either of the motion or the amendment. [Mr. Daglish: Until you get knowledge you cannot know what action might be possible.] If we do obtain the knowledge, what advantage will be gained? What would be the use of gaining the knowledge if no good results could be achieved therefrom? If we could advocate that there should be special duties

again, there might be some good result ; but we cannot do that. It would be useless to ask that a special tariff should be given to our industries. We know that no tariff will be framed by the Federal Government that will give special legislation to Western Australia. What I would suggest is that the motion be withdrawn for the present with a view afterwards of bringing up some motion which might be beneficial. As to the amendment we know how injurious the abolition of the sliding scale has been and how powerless we are in the matter. The incidence of the tariff does not affect us much as far as goods from beyond the seas are concerned, as in connection with goods which are so cheaply produced in the Eastern States, and the importation of which, owing to the fact that they are able to be brought in here free of duty, has a very serious effect upon our industries. The Federal tariff which gives inter-State freetrade has crippled the industries here.

MR. J. EWING (Collie) : I approve of the motion submitted by the Leader of the Opposition. To-night a select committee has been appointed which is not of such paramount importance as the one now asked for, and which the Government are opposing. The action taken by the Leader of the Opposition in bringing this matter forward is commendable. I would point out to the general public—it is well known to every member of the House—that the gentlemen who take positions on select committees are not paid. If they are willing and anxious in the interests of the State to give their time—and a considerable amount of time would have to be given on a select committee of this kind—for nothing, I fail to see why the motion should not be carried. The expense certainly would not be great. The chief cost would be in the matter of printing, and I feel sure that those gentlemen who will be appointed will be able to curtail the cost of printing as much as possible. I think there will be little more expense than that in connection with the committee. The amendment is a very good one and I intend to support it. It is wise that we should see what effect the

removal of the duties has had on the industries of this State. It must be remembered that we are going to very much trouble at the present time in order to find out exactly what the injury is to the people of the State on account of Federation. If a representative committee is appointed we will get some finality on that matter. The Minister for Mines stated that no finality could be arrived at and that, even if a committee was appointed and reported in opposition to Federation, showing how disastrous it had been, we could do nothing. I fail to see the correctness of that argument. In New South Wales and, I think, in Queensland, there has been a great feeling of unrest in regard to Federation. They recognise, as we recognise, and the general public of Western Australia recognise, that it is almost impossible to secede from Federation. We should give up that cry. What we should do is to co-operate with the Eastern States to see whether there cannot be an amendment of the Constitution brought about. The people of Australia properly desire Federation; it is a high ideal which we should try to live up to. The only way to remedy the present position is that only those matters should be placed in the hands of the Federal Parliament which do not affect the individual States. I think a select committee could make a recommendation as to the best means of helping this and perhaps the other States, and could take steps to prevent injury being done by preventing the development of the various industries. I hope the Government will allow the motion to pass and that representative gentlemen will be appointed members of the committee. If that is done I feel sure that the work will not be a costly one, and that the result will be of great benefit, not only to the members of this House, but also to the people of Western Australia generally.

MR. W. C. ANGWIN (East Fremantle) : I wish to support the amendment. The Government have already shown that they recognise the State has lost something by the abolition of the local tariff, inasmuch as they have increased the harbour dues by 3s. a ton on

many articles which are imported. This is done with a view if possible of making good some of the losses caused by the abolition of the tariff. Evidently they desire to maintain the same revenue as existed before the alteration was brought into force. I was much surprised to hear the Minister for Mines oppose the motion. The only reason I can see for his opposition is, if it is proved that the revenue we are supposed to have lost through the abolition of the inter-State duties remains in the pockets of the people, the Minister will lose the opportunity of pointing out to the people that the State has lost so much through Federation. But the same fact will give him the opportunity of showing the people that while we are imposing direct taxation, the indirect taxation that has been remitted is still retained by the people. If only for this reason, I think it fair that the Government should agree to appointing the select committee. The result will be beneficial to every person in the State, for numbers of people ask almost daily, what have the people gained through Federation and what have they lost? I am personally of opinion, though I have no data to back me up, that the people of Western Australia have gained nothing by the reduction of the local tariff. [*The Treasurer*: Then who has gained?] The importers, I believe; and the Government have recognised the fact by increasing the harbour dues to 3s. a ton, a small increase so that the importers cannot pass it on by increasing the prices of goods to the consumer. Consequently the Government are securing profits that formerly went into the pockets of the importers.

Mr. T. HAYWARD (Wellington): The last speaker says the middleman received all the benefit of the reduction of the inter-State duties. That I deny. Take for instance flour, one of the most important articles in consumption; flour is cheaper here to-day than in the other States; and had it not been for the duties we should have been paying more for flour than our neighbours in the East. The same is true of potatoes, cereals, and even meat; for on those articles the

middleman does not receive any benefit whatever. It is the producer, the farmer, who has suffered most by the removal of the inter-State duties. I had no intention of speaking, but I could not sit still on hearing it stated that the middleman has received all the benefit from the abolition of the sliding scale.

Mr. E. C. BARNETT (Albany): This is a subject on which I can speak with authority, having a fairly extensive knowledge of the manner in which business is conducted in this State; and I can say the public have had the full benefit of the reduction of inter-State duties, and more than the full benefit. In making up the cost of an article one takes the invoice price, the duty, freight and charges, and adds the profit. Take for instance bacon, cheese, and butter, on which the duty was 2d. and 3d. a pound. The public have saved at least 2½d. a pound, whereas the duty taken off was only 2d.; and where the duty was 3d. a pound the reduction in price is probably nearer 4d. than 3d. Traders in Western Australia—and I speak with a thorough knowledge of the State—have not taken advantage of the public by reason of the reduction of inter-State duties, but the public have received the full benefit of all reductions.

The TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson): I am sure the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath), the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish), and other members will understand that I pronounce against the proposed select committee simply on the score of expense. I think we are about to have too many select committees, each of which, as members know, must cost a considerable sum. I have come to the conclusion that if we enter on an inquiry of this sort, which, as admitted by the member for Subiaco, will extend to considerable limits—indeed his amendment will make it much more extensive than the original motion—it will cost some hundreds of pounds before it is finished. [*Mr. Ewing*: How?] How are all select committees costly? There are *Hansard* reporting, printing, and witnesses' expenses if brought from a dis-

tance. The point is this. Can we get any tangible result from the inquiry? We know well that as a result of the abolition of the special tariff the money saved is in the pockets of the people of Western Australia; whether it is in the pockets of one section of the people or another is a point which I agree with the member for Subiaco no one can possibly find out. [Mr. Daglish: I did not say no one could find it out.] It is impossible to find out. Speaking the other night the hon. member himself took up that attitude—that we could not allocate the benefit of the tariff abolition. [Mr. Daglish: Not without investigation.] Surely members will perceive that a mere investigation cannot possibly be conclusive. We have the evidence of the member for Albany (Mr. Barnett), who says the prices have been reduced and the consumers have thus benefited. [Mr. Daglish: On one or two specific lines.] I venture to say, if you take such a line as flour, mentioned by the member for Wellington (Mr. Hayward), even knowing that the price is now much lower than previously, knowing that it is lower than in the Eastern States, can you prove that our people have the benefit of the abolition of the sliding-scale duties on flour? [Mr. A. J. Wilson: They benefit at the expense of the producer.] They benefit by increased competition and increased production; because we are now producing more than our local market can absorb, and are entering on an export trade; but that does not affect the question. To my mind—of course members can vote as they will—this inquiry will be interminable, it will be costly to the State, and the result will be of no advantage, for no action can be taken. There is no analogy between the select committee proposed and the select committee just appointed on the pastoral industry. That is a question of the best means of building up an industry and securing outside markets; but here we are simply to say whether Tom, Dick, or Harry has received the advantage from the abolition of duties. It does not matter whether they have. We know that some of them have, and they

are all Western Australians. We know that the law of supply and demand will ultimately lead to the people receiving the benefit. Whenever we take off a duty, that may not have a direct effect on the consumer; but so long as we have competition, and have not any of the combines and trusts to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, then ordinary trade competition is ultimately bound to have the effect of giving the consumer the advantage of every reduction in duties. I admit at once that the amendment is much wider than the original motion; not that I think we can do much more than we are now doing to assist our local industries. Wherever the Government have an opportunity we are assisting them; wherever we can give work to our local factories we are giving it, even if it costs us a little more. We believe in assisting our local industries on every possible occasion. Can we do more, even if it is proved conclusively that they have suffered—and we know that without an inquiry? I do not think we can do more. Can the result enable us to benefit by negotiating with the Federal Government? I doubt whether that would have any effect. We have put figures before the various Conferences, figures which were conclusive to our minds, showing that we were injured through Federation; figures much more conclusive than any inquiry of this sort would bring forth; but they had very little effect, I am sorry to say, on our Eastern neighbours. Is it worth while to go to so much expense to gain information, perhaps in fuller detail, which we already possess? Personally I do not think it is, and therefore I must take the stand that I am not justified in endorsing the expenditure of public moneys in order to gain that information.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. BATH (in reply as mover): I desire to make a few remarks in reply to the Treasurer. It is noticeable in this House that when the Treasurer lacks some stable argument either in advocacy of or in opposition to any proposal—when as in this case he lacks some solid

argument against the motion as amended—he allows his imagination to run riot. He has made a mountain out of a mole-hill in regard to the difficulty, the time necessary, and the expense to be incurred in securing this information. I submit, and it should be apparent to any member, that not a tithe of the expense will be incurred that will be necessary to obtain the information sought by the motion of the member for Guildford, whose select committee, it is presumed, will be so useful. And as to the difficulty of finding out where the advantage or the disadvantage lies, I say it is merely a question of ascertaining the price of articles when the sliding scale was in full force, and the prices of articles at the present time, as retailed to the consumer. I submit, also, it will not be necessary to examine a large number of those concerned in the importing or the retail trade in Western Australia; because we know, whether they have passed on the advantage to the consumer or have absorbed it themselves, the importers must have done so as a body. For, had there been competition, had there been any lack of understanding on their part, the competition between them would have resulted in the consumer inevitably securing the advantage from the abolition of that sliding scale. So however the reduction of the inter-State duties has resulted, if we secure the information from a few representative men, it will be illustrative of the position as a whole. I say the information which has been given by the member for Wellington and the member for Albany bears out the information which was supplied to me by representatives of firms in Western Australia. And it was on such information that I made the statement on the Address-in-Reply and in the second-reading debate on the Land Tax Assessment Bill, that the consumers had secured an advantage, that there was a relief of taxation which in its incidence was unjust, and that there were good grounds for asking that the taxation should be readjusted. Now the position is—the Treasurer used that as an argument last night—that the reduction of the sliding scale

has had an effect on the finances of the State. There is an absolute uncertainty in this matter. When the Treasurer appeals to members to support the Land Tax Assessment Bill, he practically says to them they have been relieved of this amount and therefore the people are in a position to pay this tax. It is in the interests of the people that we should know precisely the position in regard to this question; and I say there is not one-tenth of the difficulty which the Treasurer has made out in securing the information. He has made no attempt to support the contention that it will be an expensive inquiry and entail a long investigation. He has made the statement in the hope that members will swallow it. The Minister for Railways evidently has a considerable lack of knowledge of the meaning of words, because he referred to the motion as being academic. I say there is no motion that could be more practical in its effect than this, which will show us the result of the loss of the sliding scale. It is a matter that should have been investigated long ago in the interests of the people of the State. There is nothing that comes nearer home to the people of the State than the incidence of the taxation which they pay, and all the discussion we may have on the Land Tax Assessment Bill, or any proposed taxation in the future, will hang around the question of our present taxation, whether it be taxation levied by the Federal Government a portion of which is returned by the Commonwealth, or whether it be taxation levied territorially within the borders of Western Australia by the State Government. I may say the Treasurer referred to the fact that the argument of the member for Subiaco, in regard to this information being advantageous and making representations to the Federal Government because we had already made such representations, was not of much weight. I repeat, and it should be repeated on every occasion, that these representations have not been made to the Federal authorities, but have been made to State Conferences, which are absolutely irresponsible so far as the Federal control of these matters is concerned. And I contend that while the in-

formation may not commend itself to conferences of State Premiers, and while it may not have much influence on their deliberations, we cannot say the same thing of representations made to the Federal Parliament; and when the time comes, as it will inevitably come at the termination of the Braddon clause, the Treasurer will need to be armed with this information if he wishes to make out a good case to the Federal authorities. I submit therefore this is a motion that should commend itself to members, and it is the last motion upon which the Treasurer and his colleagues should use their party discipline and send their Whips round to dictate to members how they shall vote on the motion. It is a question which should be left to the discretion of members, and on which party disposition should not determine their vote in the matter.

Question (as amended) put, and a division taken with the following result :—

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	16

—

Majority against .. 1

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Argwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Davies
Mr. Collier	Mr. Gregory
Mr. English	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Hudson	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Male
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Smith	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Taylor	Mr. Price
Mr. Underwood	Mr. Varyard
Mr. Ware	Mr. A. J. Wilson
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Layman (Teller).

Question thus negatived.

MOTION—LAND CLAIM AT GUILDFORD.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford): moved—

"That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the assertions made by W. H. Summers that he was wrongfully dispossessed of certain lands at Guildford."

This matter had occupied the minds of a large number of the people of the State for a considerable time. Mr. Summers

was a very old resident of Western Australia, and he claimed that in the year 1887 certain lands were illegally taken from him through a misunderstanding on the part of the registrar or the official receiver. He (Mr. Johnson) did not understand the whole circumstances, but seeing that Mr. Summers had petitioned the Governor and the Governor had communicated with the Secretary of State, also that the Secretary of State replied stating it was a matter that required investigation on the part of the Government of the day, these facts should be sufficient to convince members that there was something requiring investigation. Mr. Summers was now over 70 years of age, and in his old days he claimed that this land was taken from him, that the home he looked forward to for spending his last days with his wife had been taken from him illegally through some mistake on the part of a public servant. It was difficult to follow the whole of the circumstances, but the late member for Guildford, now Agent General (Mr. Rason), promised that an investigation should be made, and it was the fact of Mr. Rason becoming Premier at the time that prevented his moving in this direction. The matter had been brought under his (Mr. Johnson's) notice, not only by Mr. Summers but by the petition of many of the old residents of Western Australia who were intimately associated with Mr. Summers, and who remembered the whole circumstances. He (Mr. Johnson) had seen the departmental files and had pointed out to Mr. Summers the information contained therein; but Mr. Summers claimed that the full information was not there, and that the whole information could only be obtained by a thorough investigation. We should give an opportunity to this old resident for putting his case before a committee.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore): The Treasurer had referred to the question of expense in connection with select committees. This question was not of sufficient importance to justify the appointment of a select committee, more especially as the matter had received

the consideration of four successive Governments. Mr. Summers, with a view of obtaining what he considered his rights, appealed to the Crown Law Department, and the Under Secretary (Mr. Hampton) went to a great deal of trouble to prepare a *precis* dealing with the whole question. As a result of the information so prepared, the then Minister for Justice (Mr. Hastie) stated that the case had been carefully gone into again, and was fully dealt with in a minute. From the facts shown it appeared that Mr. Summers had no claim to the land. Later on the then Premier (Mr. Daglish), in dealing with the question in a communication to Mr. Summers, stated—

"I beg to inform you that your claim has received the most careful consideration, and as the result I can find no justification therefor. There is no evidence to show that the conveyance of the land in question, namely, Guildford town lot 87, was not made by you with full knowledge and intent. I find that since the date of its conveyance you have been bankrupt on two occasions, and therefore if your land had not been transferred prior to your first bankruptcy it would have become the property of your creditors. When you were bankrupt on the second occasion, in 1878, you gave evidence in regard to your affairs, and made no mention of your claim to the ownership of this property. It would appear, therefore, that you were then aware that you had no claim to it, the only alternative being that if you had a claim you were keeping back from your creditors a knowledge of that fact. The matter of your claim was submitted in the form of a petition to His Excellency the Governor in 1902, and was then fully investigated. There is nothing to be gained by farther correspondence on this subject.—*H. Daglish.*"

The matter was next brought before the Premier of the last Government, Mr. Rason, who referred it to the Acting Attorney General, the Hon. M. L. Moss, who stated that the matter had been considered by Mr. James and also Mr.

Hastie, and that on the last occasion a most careful inquiry had been made by Mr. Hampton, Under Secretary for Law, whose minute fully dealt with the subject matter of the petition. Mr. Moss recommended that Mr. Rason should advise the Governor that the prayer of the petition be not granted, and added that similar advice had been tendered on two previous occasions. So members would see that every investigation had been made. A copy of the whole of the correspondence was handed to Mr. Summers, who on the 29th June, 1906, acknowledged the receipt of 38 sheets of typewritten matter, which he desired to have in connection with the placing of his case before the High Court. Apparently Mr. Summers did not carry out his intention of placing the matter before the High Court, and on the 16th July wrote to the Colonial Secretary (Hon. J. D. Connolly) asking to lay his case before the Minister. The communication being passed on to him (the Premier) he replied :—

"I have to state that when you called at this office on two occasions recently it was distinctly stated that you required the papers then asked for that you might place your case before the High Court of Australia. In view of that statement, the Government, whilst not desirous to re-open the matters dealt with in your complaints, acceded to your request and gave you copies of all papers which you considered would be of assistance. On the 29th June—the date of your last visit to this office—I caused to be handed to you 38 pages of typewritten matter, receipt of which you said was necessary to enable you to have your papers complete for submission to the High Court. In view, therefore, of past correspondence in connection with the matters dealt with in these papers, and your recent intimation that you were taking your case to a higher tribunal, the Government do not feel justified to take any farther action at the present time.—*N. J. Moore.*"

From the contents of these files members must recognise that the matter had been inquired into by four successive Govern-

ments. The Attorneys General of the various Governments had gone into the matter very thoroughly, and it would be a waste of time and expense if a select committee were appointed.

Mr. JOHNSON (in reply as mover) : Before the motion was defeated, members should understand that it was all very fine for Ministers to ask for a statement to be prepared by officers of their departments. It was well known that we did not get always the whole truth and nothing but the truth from departmental files. The investigation asked for was into the actions of Government servants, but we knew perfectly well we could not get from departmental files the misdeeds of Government servants. Mr. Summers' contention was that the land had been illegally taken from him, not by any Government but by the action of some Government servant who did not thoroughly understand what he was doing. If that were so, and seeing that the transaction was a number of years old, it would not appear on the files. Nothing affecting Government servants would be found on departmental files. Ministers in seeking to find whether Mr. Summers' contentions were true, did not probe the matter and get information from those outside the department thoroughly conversant with it, but simply went to the departmental officers and got departmental files. The conclusions arrived at on the file produced were altogether different from the information supplied by Mr. Summers and by many old residents in this State. As a matter of fact, members of the House, old residents of the State, agreed that this land was illegally taken from Mr. Summers, and he (Mr. Johnson) had expected their assistance in getting his inquiry.

The Minister for Works : What about the bankruptcy ?

Mr. JOHNSON : That occurred in 1871 ; the land transactions needing investigation took place in 1887. He (Mr. Johnson) did not know whether Mr. Summers got his discharge.

The Premier : Mr. Summers must have got his discharge, else there would not have been a second bankruptcy.

Mr. JOHNSON : The bankruptcy of 1871 was the second bankruptcy. The old gentleman started afresh in life after that, and in 1887 became possessed of certain land. This was the land in connection with which an investigation was needed. Many old colonists went so far as to sign a petition praying the Governor to give consideration to this old gentleman's contention that the land really belonged to him and should belong to him in his old days, instead of his being practically cast out in the streets through some wrong, according to Mr. Summers, done to him by a Government servant. According to what the Premier said to him (Mr. Johnson) privately last session, he thought the Premier would agree to this investigation. The Premier now pointed out that he intended to make the inquiry himself—another departmental inquiry ; there had already been about 40 or 50 departmental inquiries, the same file always being taken, and each Minister always taking the previous minutes on the file as conclusive evidence. The only way to get a full investigation was to get evidence from those not dependent on departmental files ; consequently the Government should reconsider their decision and have the investigation asked for.

Question put, and negatived on the voices.

REPORT—HARBOUR WORKS, GERALDTON.

On motion by Mr. T. L. Brown, ordered—*That the report of Sir John Coode on the Geraldton Harbour Works, and all papers in connection with the said report, be laid on the table.*

MOTION—MUNICIPAL SUBSIDIES, HOW OVERPAID.

To Inquire.

Mr. H. BROWN (Perth) moved—

"That a select committee be appointed for the purpose of ascertaining the amount of subsidy overpaid to municipalities by the Government during the past

six years, and the persons responsible for same; also, the amounts refunded."

He said: I intend to say but a few words in connection with this motion which I trust the Government will not oppose. As members are probably aware, I have been opposing the land tax, and I intend doing so still. My reason is that we find during the last year £90,000 has been paid away in subsidies to municipalities, and I have always contended, and still contend, that if such large amounts were not paid to them illegally, there would be really no necessity for this particular land tax.

Mr. Taylor: Over what term of years does that £90,000 extend?

Mr. H. BROWN: That £90,000 was the amount paid in subsidy last year. The term of years I deal with in my motion is six. I am certain that if an inquiry is made it will be found that at all events some £20,000 should be refunded from the various municipalities of this State. I am quite aware that nearly every municipality which Ministers represent will have to heavily refund the same as Perth was made to do five years ago. One of the most glaring cases we have on record—I mentioned it during the Address-in-Reply—is Northam, which benefited to the extent of over £2,500 last year; while Fremantle last year, and also during the last two or three years, has benefited to the extent of nearly £2,000 each year more than it should have otherwise done. Fremantle premeditated this by reducing the health rate from 3d. to 1d. in the £ and paying over £1,200 each year out of general revenue which should have been charged to health account; and consequently Fremantle received an increased subsidy.

The Minister for Works: They acted absolutely legally.

Mr. H. BROWN: I beg to contradict the hon. member, and shall show that Fremantle will have to refund a considerable sum of money. To show how it was done at Northam, last year Northam, to raise sufficient for its requirements, would have raised about £1,000 on a 9d. rate, but to get the high subsidy that obtains in Northam they struck a rate of

1s. 6d., and raised £2,500, on which they received a subsidy from the Government of over £3,000; whereas, had they raised the £1,000 only that was necessary to carry on the requirements of Northam, they would only have received the smaller subsidy on the general rate. They transferred over £1,800 from general revenue in order to make up the deficit on their health account. Kalgoorlie to a slight extent was also affected with reference to its loan. Leederville, Subiaco, and Claremont were in a similar position. I trust that the Government will be generous enough to allow this select committee to be appointed in order to assist us at all events to be able to decrease the amount they propose to raise under their land taxation. I feel sure that the inquiry will reveal the fact that a sum of at least £20,000 can be obtained from these outlying municipalities. By striking the land tax the Government are taking the money of the ratepayers on the one hand and are giving it in increased sops, at their discretion, to the most favoured municipalities on the other hand. The amount raised in Bunbury for every pound given by the Government to the local authority amounted to 3½d., while in the Busselton district for every pound granted by the Government they raise the enormous sum of 5d. I trust that the Government will give me a select committee so that I can help them to improve the bad financial state they are in at the present time.

The TREASURER (Hon. Frank Wilson): I am making inquiries on this matter, and I now move—

"That the debate be adjourned."

Mr. Taylor: I hope the Minister will give the House an assurance that we shall have an opportunity of dealing with this important matter.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	..	12
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	8

AYES.	NOES
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Burnett	Mr. B. Brown
Mr. Bath	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Collier
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. English	Mr. Holman
Mr. Davies	Mr. Hudson
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Sculdaun
Mr. Harward	Mr. Taylor
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Male	Mr. Heitmann (T. Her).
Mr. N. J. Moore	
Mr. Pie-se	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Verryard	
Mr. A. J. Wilson	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Gordon (Teller).	

Motion thus passed, debate adjourned.

MOTION—MINING ACCIDENTS, RETURN.

Mr. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison)
moved—

"That a return showing (1) the number of accidents reported as having occurred in our mines during the year 1906; (2) the names of persons injured, also the mines and gold-fields where the accidents occurred, be laid on the table of the House."

He said: The reason for moving this is in consequence of certain replies which were given to me when asking a question on this subject last year. On two occasions I asked questions as to the number of accidents, and in reply to one of them I received an answer which showed that at the end of October the total number of accidents in the mines for the first ten months was 862, comprising 32 fatal, 336 serious, and 494 minor. The number did not diminish towards the end of the year, but we find in the report issued by the Mines Department that there is a record of only some 519 having occurred altogether. A report like that is misleading. Probably the Minister will say that a large number of accidents, some 500 or 600, were not serious but only trivial ones. A great many of those accidents which evidently were not considered worthy of reporting were, I believe, very serious. I desire to know the names of the persons who were injured and the mines in which the accidents occurred. When the re-

turn comes down to the House it will be, I am afraid, an appalling one. I deprecate the action of the Mines Department in issuing returns which do not show all the accidents which really occurred. I do not anticipate any opposition to the motion, for it will not incur a very great expense, the records being already in the Mines Department, and it will only be necessary for a clerk to type out a list and send it to the House. I do not intend to go fully into the question now, although I believe there will be room for inquiry in this matter in the future. We cannot be too careful in making known, not only to the people engaged in the mining industry, but also to the people of the State, the number of accidents that really occur. By showing the miners themselves the large number of accidents that occur, they may be taught to be more careful and, by giving the management the same information, they will realise that it is necessary for them to take extra precautions to prevent the number of accidents from increasing. I believe that the number of accidents reported this year has not been so large as last year. That is a cause for gratification, provided that instructions have not been issued to refrain from reporting all accidents that have occurred. In last December I asked the Minister for Mines the following question:—

"What accidents have occurred in the mines in the State, as reported to the Mines Department, since the 31st August, 1906, showing (a) fatal accidents, (b) accidents other than fatal, (c) total number of accidents, fatal and otherwise, reported for the year 1906."

The reply was as follows:—

"(a) Fatal accidents 6; serious accidents 68; minor accidents 78; (c) total for the year ended the 31st October, fatal accidents 32, serious accidents, 336, minor accidents 494, total 862."

That return was for the first ten months of 1906 only. In the Mines Department Report, on the contrary,

the total shown, including fatal accidents and otherwise, was only 519. There is a terrible discrepancy there, and the report is misleading. I would like to know who is responsible. Earlier in last session I asked a question as to the number of accidents that had been reported to the Mines Department during the ten months ended the 30th September, 1906, showing (a) fatal accidents, (b) accidents other than fatal. This was on October 17th. The Minister replied stating that the complete returns for September were not available, but to the 31st August, 1906, the fatal accidents numbered 26, the serious accidents 268, the trivial accidents 416, making a total of 710. Not only from the start of the year, but also throughout the year, there were, whether intentionally or by accident I am not in a position to say, misleading reports from the Mines Department as to the number of accidents. We who have been interested in miners' unions have reason to know that the drain on the funds, owing to the accidents, fatal and otherwise, has been most serious, and we are convinced that steps must be taken to prevent these accidents. Only lately it has been found absolutely necessary either to increase the contributions to the various unions or to decrease the accident pay. Instead of covering up the number of accidents that have occurred the Mines Department should make it their duty to show clearly what accidents have occurred and should take precautions to see that the number is diminished. It is well known that accidents in mines cannot be prevented altogether, but in Western Australia a great deal could be done to decrease the number. It seems to me that sufficient precautions are not taken by the inspectors to see that the rushing of the men and the breaking of ore are not considered rather than the men's safety. Even the report of the State Mining Engineer, included in the annual report of the department, clearly sets out that something must be done to reduce the large number of accidents. In 1905 there were 34 fatal accidents and 270 other accidents posted, about

300 altogether. [*The Minister: What about the year before?*] There were 43 fatal and 153 other accidents, a total of 195. In 1906 I drew the attention of the Minister to the increase for 1905 over 1904; and he said the reason was not that more accidents had occurred, but that mining accidents were now being reported of the character not previously reported. I maintain that the introduction of certain legislation was in a great measure responsible for those accidents. I maintain that the inspection of mines branch should be administered so as to prevent a large number of accidents that occur. This matter will probably engage my attention and the attention of the House before the session is over. Rather than see the needless accidents that happen in our mines, I should prefer the cost of production to be greatly increased; that the lives and limbs of our workers should be safeguarded, rather than that dividends should go into the pockets of the London shareholders.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): If I thought it worth while, I should move the adjournment of the debate for the purpose of refuting many of the statements made by the hon. member. However, as I do not propose to oppose the production of the return, and as I presume later opportunities will occur for combating his statements, I think it will be wiser to agree to the motion. I should like to point out, however, that the hon. member mentioned having received some returns which showed not only the fatal accidents but the serious and the trivial accidents. The hon. member knows that under the departmental regulations no accident is recorded unless it has incapacitated the employee for a period of more than fourteen days. This is clearly pointed out, not only in the report of the Under Secretary for Mines, but also in the voluminous report of the State Mining Engineer. In compiling the return asked for, a complete copy of the whole register of accidents will have to be

prepared and laid on the table; and time and expense would be saved if members would let me know exactly what special information they would like to have published in the annual report of the department. For instance, on pages 19 and 20 we have a summary by the Under Secretary; then from page 51 to about page 60 is a long report by the State Mining Engineer. If members would like other particulars to be included I should be pleased to instruct that they be published, if the information will serve any practical purpose at all. The hon. member made a statement which I do not think he meant; and I can assure him now that until this moment I have not seen the State Mining Engineer's report, prepared by that officer and included in the report of the department. The State Mining Engineer writes his own report, and it is published as he writes it. The return asked for by the hon. member will be prepared as speedily as possible.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): I should like to move an amendment that the words "and until the 30th June, 1907," be inserted after "1906" in line 3. If the Minister objects that the inclusion of accidents till the later date will entail any heavy expense, I will not press the amendment; but I should like the report to show the number of accidents till as recent a date as possible. I am sorry that this year, and especially lately, we can hardly take up a morning paper without reading of mining accidents.

The Minister: The average is slightly lower this year.

Mr. TAYLOR: Accidents have recently been very numerous.

The MINISTER: Yes. Do not trouble to move the amendment. I will see that the information is included.

Mr. P. COLLIER (Boulder): I will move an amendment that the words "the nature of employment at time of accident, and cause of same" be inserted after "injured," in paragraph 2.

The MINISTER: I do not mind furnishing an exact copy of the register of accidents. I hope the hon. member will not move any farther amendment. I will try to get the return completed to the 30th June, and before I start the work, I will have the plan of it brought here and submitted to members opposite. I shall try to meet their wishes as far as I can, without going through all the reports and making up a special return.

Mr. COLLIER: That will be sufficient because the information I wish is contained in the mines register.

Question put and passed.

BILL—STATISTICS.

Order for third reading read.

The PREMIER: A promise was given last night to recommit this Bill, but before any fresh amendment could be considered it must appear on the Notice Paper. The amendment had been handed in and would appear in the Notice Paper to-morrow. Standing Order No. 297 provided that no amendment should be made in and no new clauses added to any Bill recommitted on the third reading unless notice thereof had been previously given.

Mr. Bath: That was on the question of the adoption of the Committee report.

The PREMIER: The Committee report was adopted at the previous sitting.

Mr. JOHNSON: A mistake was made last night in adopting the Committee's report which should have been held over for consideration. The Committee's report having been adopted it necessitated that notice should be given of the amendment. He (Mr. Johnson) had given notice of an amendment and it would appear on the Paper to-morrow. If the Premier adjourned the Order of the Day, that would give an opportunity of moving the amendment to-morrow and would carry out the promise given.

Order postponed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.14 o'clock, until the next day.

Contractor at the current rate of wages applicable to the trade at the place where they are so employed."

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 8th August, 1907.

	PAGE
Questions: Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Railway, Tenders	714
Immigrants' Luggage, Fremantle	714
Bills: Statistics, a farther amendment made	714
Vaccination Act Amendment, 2a, resumed	715
Port Hedland-Marble Bar Railway, 2a, resumed	718
Standing Orders Revision: Council's Requests as to Money Bills	736

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

Prayers.

QUESTION — HOPETOUN-RAVENSTHORPE RAILWAY, TENDERS.

Mr. HUDSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Did the Public Works Department tender for the contract for the construction of the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe Railway? 2, Within what period is the successful tenderer required by the contract to complete the construction of the railway? 3, Is provision made in the contract for the payment of standard or other fixed rate of wages?

The PREMIER replied: 1, A sealed estimate of cost of construction was placed in the Minister's hands by the Engineer-in-Chief previous to the opening of tenders. 2, Twelve months after acceptance of tenders. 3, Clause 26, Sub-clause 3, of General Conditions of Contract reads as follows:—"All persons paid by the Contractor on daily wages in the performance of any of the works herein referred to shall be paid by the

QUESTION — IMMIGRANTS' LUGGAGE, FREMANTLE.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier: 1, Does the Government intend to call tenders for the handling and carriage of immigrants' luggage from ship, etc., at Fremantle this year? 2, If so, when; and will the tenders be open to the public to compete?

The PREMIER replied: No. Because the immigrants are free agents in the matter; but a list of prices of the different carriers will be obtained and exhibited for the information of the immigrants.

Mr. Angwin: Will the Government prepare a special list of the carriers available, as the present list mentions only one carrier?

The PREMIER: The reply is that a list of prices and of the different carriers will be obtained and exhibited.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Fisheries Report, 1906.

By the Treasurer: 1, Copies of Orders in Council under Section 35 of the Audit Act, 1904. 2, Additional Regulations under Explosives Act.

BILL—STATISTICS.

Recommittal.

On the motion of Mr. Johnson, Bill re-committed for an amendment.

In Committee.

Clause 8—Statistics to be collected:

On motion by Mr. Johnson, paragraph (e.) amended by inserting after "industry" the words "detailing nationality of proprietor and the number and nationality of employees."

Bill farther reported with amendment.