

Hon. E. McLarty supported the amendment. Why should the holder of land with an unimproved value of £999 be exempt and the man with £1,001 worth be taxed? Either abolish the exemption, which would be the better course, or make the exemption general.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY would support the amendment. The last speaker put the case clearly. The man whose land had an unimproved value of £999 might have effected no improvements, and would obtain the exemption. If his income were £200 he would be exempt from income tax. But the man with land valued at £1,001 would have no exemption.

Hon. J. M. DREW: This clause furnished one of the most valuable features of the Bill. A land tax should be imposed to raise revenue and to discourage the holding of large estates. The clause had a tendency in that direction, and recognised the principle adopted in all progressive countries. There was a graduated scale in New Zealand, the higher values paying the higher rate. The object of this clause was to introduce that principle in a modified form.

Hon. G. THROSSELL: The object of the exemptions was to protect the small and struggling man. We could not go beyond what the clause provided without losing sight of that object and without considerably reducing the revenue to be derived.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

#### MESSAGE—ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read, assenting to three Bills, namely, Marriage Act Amendment, Sales of Government Property, Navigation Act Amendment.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at four minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next day.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 11th December, 1907.

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

Prayers.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Works: By-laws passed by the Roads Boards of North-East Coolgardie and Marble Bar.

By the Premier: Plans relating to the Newcastle-Bolgart Railway.

#### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK ADVANCES.

Mr. STONE asked the Honorary Minister (Agriculture): 1, What is the amount paid out from the Agricultural Bank to date? 2, What are the names of the Magisterial Districts that received the financial assistance? 3, What is the amount received by each Magisterial District?

The HONORARY MINISTER (Agriculture) replied: To get this information will take considerable preparation. I hope the hon. member will withdraw the question.

Mr. STONE: I withdraw the question, though it is information one would like to have.

#### QUESTION—SAVINGS BANK FUNDS ON DEPOSIT.

Mr. STONE asked the Treasurer: 1, Is it a fact that the Government have a credit balance of about £467,000 of the Savings Bank funds in one of the banks in Perth? 2, If not, what is the amount,

and where is it deposited? 3. What is the credit balance at the West Australian Bank on account of the Savings Bank? 4. How many years have the Government kept the credit balance of the Savings Bank at the W.A. Bank? 5. Why is the credit balance not distributed over other banks doing business in this State? 6. What rate of interest does the said credit balance pay per centum? 7. Have the Government negotiated with other banks for higher interest on said balance?

The TREASURER replied: 1, No. 2, The credit balance on closing business last evening with W.A. Bank was £393,758 16s. 5d. 3, Answered by No. 2. 4, Since its inception, December, 1863. 5, Because the agreement made with associated banks on 17th October, 1900, does not apply to Savings Bank funds. 6, First £100,000, 3 per cent.; second £100,000, 1½ per cent.; and balance at 1 per cent. 7, No.

#### QUESTION—MINES REGULATION, GREENBUSHES.

Mr. TAYLOR (for Bath) asked the Minister for Mines: Will he make inquiries into the alleged breach of Section 41 of the Mines Regulation Act, 1906, by Moss and Co. at Greenbushes?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: Yes.

#### QUESTION—POLICE PROSECUTION, EVIL FAME.

Mr. WALKER asked the Attorney General: Is it true that two summonses were issued against two women of alleged evil fame in Kalgoorlie recently, and that after an adjournment of eight days had been granted, at the instance of Inspector Brophy warrants were issued against them for the same class of offence, whereby the alleged offenders were imprisoned till bail was forthcoming?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: No. The facts are as follow:—Two summonses were issued against two women under 2 Edw. VII., No. 31, Sec. 7, Subsection 2. The cases were called on the 2nd instant, and adjourned for

eight days on the application of the defendants' solicitors (not at the instance of the police). On the same day further complaints were made for subsequent offences of the same nature, upon which warrants were issued and defendants were arrested and admitted to bail. Bail was granted on the same day, namely, the 2nd inst.

Mr. WALKER: As the question appears on the Notice Paper, there is a misplaced comma which may have misled the Attorney General. The comma should be after "granted."

#### QUESTION—GOVERNMENT PRINTING, EXPLANATION.

Mr. WALKER had given notice to ask the Treasurer whether the employees of the Government Printing Office worked on Sundays with the Treasurer's approval. Mr. Walker now withdrew the question, saying his information had been incorrect.

#### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read, notifying assent to three Bills, namely Marriage Act Amendment, Sale of Government Property, Navigation Act Amendment.

#### SITTING HOURS, EXTENSION.

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) moved—

*That for the remainder of the session the House do meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 2.30 o'clock, p.m., until 6.15 p.m. if necessary, and if requisite from 7.30 p.m. onwards.*

As it was the desire of the House to get the business through before Christmas it should meet with the wishes of hon. members to meet at 2.30 o'clock. If possible we might get away a little earlier at night than had been the case lately. No doubt the member for Mount Margaret would say the motion should have been introduced previously.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) supported the motion. He was sorry the suggestion he made at the early part of the session had not been accepted, because by this time we would have finished our

Parliamentary duties, and we would not have been compelled to sit all night and in the early hours of the morning so repeatedly as had been the case. It was to be hoped if the Premier were in the same position next session a motion on these lines would be brought down at the early stages of the session.

Mr. WALKER: The motion was not verbally correct. The words "and sit" should be inserted after "2.30 o'clock p.m."

The SPEAKER: If the member was satisfied of that, he would have the motion altered. The words had been omitted in the Printing Office.

Mr. WALKER: That would effect the purpose.

Motion put and passed.

## STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

### *To expedite Business.*

The PREMIER (Hon. N. J. Moore) moved—

*That for the remainder of the Session the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be passed through all stages in one day, and Messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received; also, so far as to admit of the reporting and adopting of the Resolutions of the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees.*

Mr. G. TAYLOR: We had a lot of business to deal with, measures involving very heavy expenditure, and it was unfair with a Notice Paper like the present—for this session we had done so little work and completed so little—to suspend the Standing Orders to enable Bills to be brought down and passed through all stages in one sitting.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If any amendment were made in a Bill, the Standing Order could not apply.

Mr. TAYLOR: That was so, but at the same time was it a wise precedent to adopt, while we had on the Notice Paper Bills practically untouched, that had not passed the second reading stage, involving huge expenditure? He understood the

Standing Orders at the end of every session were invariably suspended to deal with measures from another place; but he did not think we should suspend the Standing Orders when we had such a heavy Notice Paper, containing Bills dealing with a large expenditure of loan money. The Premier would be well advised if he postponed the motion till Friday next or Tuesday, and dealt with measures in the ordinary way, not carrying the second reading, taking the Bill through Committee, passing measures through their remaining stages and despatching them to another place at one sitting. He did not look on another place as being the safety valve that numbers of people thought. He would be willing to assist the Premier on Friday next, or Tuesday, to carry this motion, as it was intended to rise before Christmas. Still he (Mr. Taylor) was not anxious to rise before Christmas; business of the country had the first call on his services, and he preferred coming back after Christmas to deal with the financial matters rather than hurry them through now.

Mr. WALKER: Before we consented to a motion of this kind, the House ought to be informed of the Bills on the very lengthy programme it was intended to put through, under the suspension of Standing Orders. The Notice Paper was absolutely long enough for a whole session.

Mr. Holman: As long as a lawyer's bill of costs.

Mr. WALKER: It would be absolutely unfair to ask the House to put through the Bills we had on the Notice Paper. It would be making a farce of legislation. There would be no discussion, it would mean lumping the business of the House and shoving it through. There would be no intellectual discussion.

The Premier: A similar motion was proposed on the 28th November last year.

Mr. WALKER: Before the motion was assented to last year there was an understanding arrived at as to what measures were really of importance, and what should be held over until another session to be dealt with. If that could be done now there would be no objection

to the motion. There were certain measures, non-contentious, to which no objection would be raised to allow them to go through their stages in one day ; but there were measures involving large principles of a debatable character. There ought to be another understanding that if the motion were agreed to there would be no application of the gag. We had a faint recollection of whole bodies of Estimates being rushed through by the application of the gag, and he would not like to see Bills rushed through in the same way. We could not properly carry out the programme in the time left ; it would be scandalous to attempt it. The Government should agree to hold over the motion until to-morrow, and in the meantime the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier should confer together as to what was necessary to be passed this session.

Mr. HOLMAN opposed the motion. This was the usual way of trying to push important matters through without giving them that consideration their importance warranted. We had on the Notice Paper 24 Bills, and there were seven in another place that would have to be dealt with. On the Notice Paper there were five important railway measures involving an expenditure of close on half a million of money. Then there were other important measures, to say nothing of the Nedlands Park Tramways Bill, and other tramway Bills. And the Notice Paper appropriately wound up with the Sand Drift Amendment Bill. If we were to rush these measures through with undue haste, in time we should repent it. In 1904 when the Labour Government were in power a similar motion to this was carried only two or three days before the prorogation, and at that time the Minister for Mines strongly opposed the motion. The motion was moved on the 20th December and Parliament prorogued on the 23rd or 24th. It was now the 11th December, nearly three weeks before Christmas. If the Minister for Mines repeated his remarks of 1904 he would be near the mark. We could not expect another place to deal with just on 30 important Bills in 14 days. They could deal with a lot, and he hoped they would

deal with a number in a speedy manner. In the closing days of any session it was absolutely necessary to suspend the Standing Orders to allow business to be completed ; but the Government should not try to get through all the business on the Notice Paper with only five sitting days in front of us. Next session we should find 20 or 30 amending measures to patch up Bills which had been hurriedly passed this session. He had no desire to sit after Christmas. The Government should say what measures they were desirous of passing, and we could give those measures full consideration. If the Government wished to suspend the Standing Orders, to put finishing touches on legislation that had been practically passed, there would be no objection. He protested against this, but was aware that the majority behind the Government would enable the motion to be carried.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON realised that a motion of this description was necessary towards the close of a session, but had the proper time arrived? The Notice Paper contained five railway proposals aggregating nearly £265,000 of expenditure for agricultural lines and the Black Range Railway. Three of these had not yet reached the second reading. The second reading of such Bills should not be rushed, but members should have opportunity to peruse official reports and other information submitted in support of the proposals. Departmental information was sometimes not reliable, as he had discovered in carefully and impartially examining one railway proposition now before the House. He would agree to the motion if assured that the Government would not rush through the second reading of Railway Bills.

The PREMIER : A similar motion was last year moved on the 28th November, and Parliament prorogued 17 days later ; hence the introduction of the motion did not necessarily infer an immediate prorogation. The general desire now was to finish before Christmas. As regarded the Railway Bills, those now awaiting second reading had been on the Notice Paper over a month, and the information relating to them was available to members all that time. The

remaining Bills were included in last year's Loan Schedule, and were then discussed at length. No attempt would be made to unduly hurry the second readings, and members would be afforded every facility for perusing the documents and maps to enable them to come to a decision as to the justification of the proposals.

Question put and passed.

#### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1907-8.

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

*In Committee of Ways and Means.*

The House having resolved into Committee of Ways and Means—

The TREASURER moved—

*That towards making good the supply to be granted to His Majesty, a sum not exceeding £2,479,558 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Western Australia, and a sum not exceeding £31,836 from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account.*

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, the report adopted.

#### BILL—ROADS AND STREETS CLOSURE.

*Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Legislative Council, in the schedule, was now considered in Committee.

City of Perth—paragraph 4, strike out the words "all that portion of the Esplanade lying between the easterly side of William Street and westerly side of Barrack Street and south of a line parallel to a distance of 75 leagues from the southern boundaries of Perth town lots L 1 and L 9":

The PREMIER moved—

*That the amendment be agreed to.*

The amendment made by the Council meant that the portion of road running between the Esplanade Hotel and the Weld Club, at present forming the enclosure between the road and the Esplanade,

should not be closed as a street. Some years ago that portion of the road was fenced, and now trees and grass were planted. The City Council desired that the portion of road within the fence should be closed altogether as a road, so that it could be included in the Esplanade. As the time might arise when it would be advisable to widen the street, he saw no objection to the amendment of the Legislative Council.

Mr. TAYLOR: It would be wise to accept the amendment, as it meant maintaining a greater width of street. In time to come that would certainly be necessary for the thoroughfare. Citizens of Perth had spoken to him on the question, and he was pleased that another place had suggested the amendment and that the Premier had accepted it.

Mr. BREBBER: When a body like the City Council desired to close a portion of a street in the city their request should not be refused by the Legislature. At present the portion of the road was really a small park, for it was planted with trees and grass. As, however, it was a portion of the road, the Council were liable to be mulct in damages if an accident occurred thereon. Another reason why the road should be declared closed was that it was fairly high land and would make an admirable spot from which spectators could watch sporting matches being played on the Esplanade. The Council desired to include this block of land in the Esplanade, for at present in reality it formed a portion of that recreation ground. In the future if increased traffic required a wider road it would be an easy matter to obtain an additional strip from the Esplanade. The Legislature should give the right to the City Council to decide what roads should be closed or opened. He would move that the amendment be not agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not submit that amendment, as it was a direct negative. He could vote against the motion.

Mr. GULL supported the motion as it would be very unwise to reduce the width of that road.

Mr. ANGWIN: If at any future time the necessity arose to make the road wider it could be done by taking in a portion of the Esplanade. The idea of declaring the road closed was to relieve the City Council of liability in case of an action for damages. It was the duty of the Legislature to agree to such a request when made by the City Council.

Mr. TAYLOR: In view of the mistakes made by the City Council in the past by decreasing the width of roads—a good example of this was given when they narrowed Hay Street and made it what it was to-day—it would be unwise to accede to their request. It was surprising to find the members for East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) and North Perth (Mr. Brebber) voting against the motion. Perth was a beautiful city disfigured by narrow streets, for the width of which the City Council was responsible.

Mr. H. BROWN opposed the amendment. For the last ten years this road had been increasing in width. If future tramway development warranted a farther increase after the closure, it would be easy to demolish the fence and macadamise the enclosed portion. The Perth Council had never agreed to closing Hay Street, the width of which had remained unaltered from the beginning; but the council had made a strong effort to widen the thoroughfare, and with this object had once secured the consent of all property-owners with one exception.

Mr. HEITMANN opposed the amendment. The Bill had been fully considered here, and the wishes of the City Council should be respected. Had the amendment been moved here it would have been opposed.

The PREMIER: The original width of the street was one and a-half chains. He considered that 75 links was too narrow for any street. Years ago, in subdividing land, it was usual for the sake of economy to lay out streets 50 links wide and rights-of-way of 25 links. Now it was not possible to lay out private subdivisions unless the streets were at least a chain wide. That was the rule outside municipalities; hence the more reason why we should retain the present width

of this street, which was the width of the continuation of the Bazaar Terrace end.

Mr. BREBBER: The footpath inside the reserve practically increased the width of the street by another footpath. The City Council wished the reserve cut off from the street, so that they might not be responsible for accidental collisions with the fence. The street would probably be wide enough for all time. The request of the City Council was only fair.

Question (that the Council's amendment be agreed to) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	28
Noes	..	..	..	9
Majority for				19

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Angwin
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Collier	Mr. H. Brown
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Davies
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Heitmann
Mr. Gull	Mr. Ware
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Gordon (Teller)
Mr. Holman	
Mr. Horne	
Mr. Keenan	
Mr. Layman	
Mr. McLarty	
Mr. Mitchell	
Mr. Monger	
Mr. N. J. Moore	
Mr. S. F. Moore	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Scaddan	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Stone	
Mr. Stuart	
Mr. Taylor	
Mr. Underwood	
Mr. Walker	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Troy (Teller)	

Question thus passed.

Resolution reported, the report adopted; a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—DISTRICT FIRE BRIGADES.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Daglish in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2 Interpretation:

Mr. SCADDAN moved as an amendment—

*That the word "district," in the definition of "board," be struck out.*  
The definition would then read that "board" meant "a fire brigades board

constituted by this Act." The object of the amendment was to create one board for the whole State outside the metropolitan area. There was no desire to strike out the creation of districts, except that he would prefer to see two districts instead of three. His idea was that the districts could have equal representation on the central board. If we had three boards it would not tend to make the fire brigades work uniform, while it would pile up administrative costs. The goldfields bodies had no objection to the proposal. It was considered that if there was one chief officer in Perth there could be deputy chief officers in each district, and the chief officer could pay regular visits to the districts.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : Western Australia was a place of immense area and interests, and even the sentiments of people varied considerably in different parts. If we attempted to constitute one central authority in Perth he was afraid the measure might not be accepted as workable by those for whom it was designed. It was that which caused him to oppose the suggestion of the member. The people on the goldfields would say that unless there was local management, or some body constituted in their midst in which they had the sentiment of possession, they would not be inclined to fall in line with the measure. The feeling of antagonism in different parts of the State was decreasing every day. It had not been felt inland so much as among the older settlers of the State. It was a matter for rejoicing that this antagonism was dying out, but a premature attempt to centralise the administration of fire brigade matters might lead to a rerudescence of that feeling, and that had actuated him in believing it would be a wiser plan to begin with three districts. For that reason he could not consent to the amendment.

Mr. H. BROWN : One board was quite sufficient. The antagonism referred to could not possibly exist among fire brigades. Later, he intended to move to repeal the existing Act, and to make this Bill apply to the whole State. Then the fire brigades work would be carried on more economically. One central authority

would be able to do the whole of the work.

Mr. HOLMAN : The feeling of rivalry against the central authority would be just as evident in the districts. The headquarters of the central district would be at Kalgoorlie, and there would be rivalry which it was to be hoped would always exist between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. The chief officer would be at Kalgoorlie, and the headquarters would be there. There would be more disturbance in that case than if the central authority were in Perth. If the chief officer were in Perth he would have no special feeling or leaning towards any one district. The trouble the Attorney General feared would be trebly accentuated by the appointment of three boards. Also there would be a considerable increase in cost, and money that should be spent in equipping the brigades would go in administration. The Government talked of doing away with departments to save administration, but here they were proposing three times the necessary expenditure. If the administration of health matters could be controlled by a central board in Perth, it should be just as simple to administer fire matters from Perth. There was no reason why we should not have local committees in each district and give them control of their districts ; but if we had a good central board with representatives from the municipal bodies, the insurance companies, the Government, and the fire brigades, there would be no necessity for local committees. The experience of Victoria proved that, and Victoria was a good example to follow in fire brigade matters. The Attorney General need have no fear that the old time feeling would come up in connection with the fire brigade movement so long as the board's affairs were properly administered. All fire brigades were now controlled by an association, whose headquarters were in Perth ; but instead of the brigades being directly represented, they appointed people in the city.

Mr. Angwin : The association had no power over the brigades.

Mr. HOLMAN : If we brought into force an Act constituting one board it

would give more satisfaction than if we had three boards. He would not offer any opposition to the measure because he wanted to see the fire insurance companies pay their quota towards the upkeep of the brigades. He was willing to assist in patching up the measure. He asked the Attorney General to give the one board system a trial. If we appointed three boards it would be one of the greatest mistakes ever made. When our fire brigade movement grew in Western Australia, and the metropolitan area here assumed the same proportions as Melbourne we could have two boards.

Mr. ANGWIN had received a letter from the secretary of the conference of goldfields local bodies by which it appeared that these bodies received a copy of the Bill before members, and before the Bill was placed on the table of the House. The only provision he wished explained was that relating to the expense. When the Victorian Fire Brigades Act was passed it was made compulsory in the metropolitan area that all the brigades should come under the board. When there was no board the administration was carried out at an expense of £100 per annum. After the board was brought into existence the cost was £1,200 per annum. Something should be done to remove the present pernicious system of compelling fire brigades to make a collection to assist in carrying on their work. It was only fair that fire insurance companies should pay something towards the upkeep of the brigades. The Bill introduced last session would have been more economical in its administration than the Bill now before the House. We should be careful that the local authorities had not the upkeep of the fire brigades thrust upon them.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment, that the following definition be added—

*"Local Authority" means a municipality and the council thereof, or the road board of a road district, and "the local authority" means the local authority for the particular district.*

The definition was the same as that given in the Health Bill. It would include all

fire brigades whether in a roads board district or in a municipality.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL accepted the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 3—Act not to apply to Municipal Districts in which the Fire Brigades Act of 1898 is in force :

Mr. H. BROWN moved an amendment—

*That in lines one to three the words "shall not apply to the municipal district of the Municipality of Perth or to any other municipal district to which the provisions of" be struck out and that the word "repeals" be inserted in lieu.*

He would farther move, that the words in lines three and four "for the time being apply" should also be struck out. By the Bill provision was made for a contribution of one quarter by the Government, three eighths by the municipalities and three-eighths by the insurance companies. Under the existing Act which referred to Perth and Fremantle the contribution was one-ninth by the Government, four-ninths by the insurance companies, and four-ninths by the municipalities. All the municipalities of the State should be placed on the one basis.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL : If the member read the wording of the clause he would see that the provision amounted to this, that if a municipal district which had the present Fire Brigades Act applied to it petitioned the Governor, the Governor might include the district under the operations of the Bill ; and under the second subclause if that took place the liabilities of the district so taken over would be also taken over as well as the assets. Therefore, it was necessary to move an amendment. Assuming the Perth Municipal Council preferred to come under the Bill they would simply petition the Governor and the Governor would make an order in pursuance of the powers granted under the clause.

At 6.15 the Chairman left the Chair..

At 7.30, Chair resumed.



Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. TAYLOR: Would existing volunteer fire brigades be compelled to come under this Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was not so much a matter of compelling such brigades to come under the Bill as one of granting the right so to do. The chief examining officer under the board might refuse permission to a brigade to come under the Act on the score of inefficiency. If the hon. member would move a new clause permitting efficient volunteer fire brigades to come under the Bill or not at their own option, he would favourably consider it.

Clause as amended agreed to.

#### Clause 4—Fire Districts:

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment—

*That the word "three" be struck out, and "two" inserted in lieu.*

The number of brigades in the present arrangement of districts were:—South-West 12, Central 10, North 3. Under the amendment the two latter would be amalgamated, giving 12 brigades in the South-West and 13 in the Central, while the representation on the board would remain unaltered.

Amendment passed.

On motion by the Attorney General, paragraph (c) struck out.

Clause as amended agreed to.

[Mr. Hudson took the Chair.]

#### Clause 5—District Boards:

On motion by Mr. Scaddan, Subclause 1 struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"There shall be constituted as hereinafter provided a Fire Brigades Board, to be called The West Australian Fire Brigades Board."

#### Clause 6—Constitution of boards:

On motions by Mr. Scaddan, all the words after "Governor" were struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"One member shall be elected by the local authorities in each fire district; provided, however, that only those local authorities which contribute under this Act shall be permitted to vote at such election. Two members shall be elected by the insurance

companies carrying on business within the district, and one member shall be elected by the volunteer brigades in each fire district."

Clause 7—agreed to.

#### Clause 8—Constitution of local committees:

On motion by Mr. Scaddan, the first paragraph was struck out, and the following words were inserted in lieu: "One of such members shall be elected by the local authority or authorities (as the case may be) of any district or districts or portions thereof forming part of such sub-district, and shall be the Chairman of the Committee."

Clauses 9 to 11—agreed to.

#### Clause 12—Tenure of members not to exceed two years:

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment—

*That the words "the members of the board may receive from the funds of the board a sum not exceeding £250 per annum in the aggregate" be added.*

This amendment would give the board power to vote a sum not exceeding £250 per annum as fees for members. Seeing that the members of the board were the representatives of the various bodies who contributed to the funds, it was right that it should be left to them to decide what fees should be paid. It was wise, however to fix a maximum amount.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 23—agreed to.

#### Clause 24—Committee of boards:

Mr. SCADDAN: The clause provided that the quorum of a committee of the board should be three. This was rather high considering that many committees would consist of only three members. Would it not be better to provide that the quorum should be a majority of the committee?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As the board only consisted of nine members it would be wise that no less a number than three should be fixed as a quorum for committees. The clause was taken from the Victorian Act.

Mr. SCADDAN: It was provided by subclause 2 that the acts of every committee of a board should be submitted to the general body of the board for approval or otherwise, consequently no decision of a committee, whatever might be the quorum, would be final without the sanction of the board. In the circumstances it was unnecessary to fix any arbitrary quorum.

*The Attorney General:* Sub-committees were always given power to act.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 25 to 30—agreed to.

Clause 31—Annual reports to Minister: Mr. BOLTON moved an amendment—

*That the words "and to each of its constituent bodies" be inserted after "Minister," in line 1.*

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 32—Approval of officers of volunteer brigades:

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment:

*That all the words after "board," in line 3, be struck out.*

The board, and not the local committee, should approve of the principal officer.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL accepted the amendment. The "principal officer" was not the chief officer.

Mr. HOLMAN: In Victoria the local committee had a voice in the appointment of the principal officer of a volunteer brigade.

Mr. SCADDAN: But by the clause the local committee of the district or sub-district might give their sanction to the appointment, and the board would have no voice at all.

Mr. HOLMAN supported the clause as printed. The principal officer of a volunteer brigade would be selected by the members, and the appointment would be approved by the board or by the local committee. The clause had stood the test of time in Victoria.

Mr. COLLIER: The clause might lead to difficulty between the local committee and the board. Each body might claim the right to approve of the appointment. It should read, "the board and the local committee, or either of them."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The principal officer would be elected by the members. If the local committee approved of the election, the board could not effectively disapprove, and *vice versa*.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. SCADDAN moved as an amendment that the following be added as Sub-clause 1:—

*The designation of such principal officer shall be decided by the board.*

It would not be wise to leave the designation to the local committee. The board would select a suitable designation, such as "superintendent," or "captain."

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 33—agreed to.

Clause 34—Chief officers:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The chief officer appointed by the board would be a central officer visiting each brigade in the district. He moved an amendment—

*That the words "for the district," in line 1, be struck out.*

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 35—Deputy chief officer and assistant chief officers:

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment—

*That the words "for each fire district" be inserted after "officer," in line 1.*

Mr. HOLMAN: This was unnecessary. In the absence of the chief officer a deputy officer was appointed to take his place in each district. Every brigade had a qualified principal officer. The deputy officer would control all the brigades in a district. The object the hon. member wished to attain would be attained by vesting the control of these brigades in the principal officer.

Amendment withdrawn.

Mr. HOLMAN: The clause did not fit in with amendments already passed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Although the clause did not fit in in the sense that it was not consequential on the other amendments, it did not differ in any material degree. There was no harm in

giving the right to appoint a deputy chief officer or assistant chief officers. The chief officer would take charge at a fire but would not interfere otherwise. The point would be given consideration.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 36—General duties and powers of chief officer:

On motion by *Mr. Scaddan*, clause amended by striking out the word "permanent" in paragraph (b).

Clauses 37 to 40—agreed to.

Clause 41—Contribution towards expenditure:

*Mr. SCADDAN*: Would the Attorney General explain this clause. It was provided that towards the estimated annual expenditure a sum equal to the whole of such expenditure in each district was to be contributed annually in "equal" portions.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL moved as an amendment—

*That the word "equal" in line 3 be struck out, and "the" inserted in lieu, and that the words "as hereinafter set out" be inserted after "portions."*

It would read then that the contributions were to be annual in portions as hereinafter set out.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 42—Municipal contributions, how ascertained:

*Mr. HOLMAN*: Would this apply to local governing bodies?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was understood that wherever the word "municipality" occurred the words "local authority" were substituted.

Clause passed.

Clauses 43 to 50—agreed to.

Clause 51—Board may borrow moneys:

*Mr. ANGWIN*: The borrowing powers of the board should be limited.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: So they were. They had to get the authority of the Government.

*Mr. ANGWIN*: That was no limitation. He moved an amendment—

*That in Subclause 2 the words "by the board shall not at any time exceed*

*£25,000 and" be inserted after "borrowed," in line 1.*

The clause would then read, "The amount so borrowed shall not at any time exceed £25,000, and with the interest thereon shall be a charge." This was following the Victorian Act with the exception that the amount in Victoria was £100,000. He believed £25,000 was sufficient for a start. Later on Parliament could increase that power.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The insertion of this clause would be an invitation to the board to borrow £25,000 as soon as possible. Under the provisions of the Bill the board would require to obtain the sanction of the Government, and as the State, if the board became a defaulter, would have to pay, the Government would be very careful about giving authority.

*Mr. ANGWIN*: It would be necessary to get the consent of the Government to borrow even up to £25,000. The amendment provided that they could not exceed that amount without the authority of Parliament. In Victoria the provision was at first as it was in this Bill, but it was found necessary to amend the Act by inserting a limitation. Power was also given in the Victorian Act to provide for a sinking fund and there was provision that if the board became a defaulter the Government could recover the interest from the municipal and other contributing bodies. Some such provision should be inserted in the Bill.

Amendment put and negatived.

*Mr. ANGWIN* moved an amendment that the following be added to Subclause 2:—

*"and the mode in which a sinking fund may be formed for the purpose of paying off such debentures, and the amount or rate of the periodical or other payments to be made into such sinking fund."*

The ATTORNEY GENERAL accepted the amendment.

Amendment passed.

*Mr. ANGWIN*: Would the Attorney General take into consideration a provision whereby the Governor in Council could call on the contributing bodies, in

case of default, to pay interest and sinking fund on the amount borrowed?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The matter would be considered.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 52—Audit of accounts:

Mr. BOLTON moved an amendment—

*That in line 2 of Subclause 2, after "Governor," the words "and to each of its constituent bodies" be inserted.*

This was consequential.

Amendment passed.

Mr. HEITMANN: Had the Attorney General taken into consideration the question of paying compensation to municipal councils or local bodies for property taken over by the board, such property having been provided by the municipal council?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The clause relating to that matter had been passed.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 53 to 58—agreed to.

Clause 59—Removal of persons not members of recognised fire brigades from burning premises:

Mr. HOLMAN: In connection with a fire which took place in West Perth on the premises of a man named Edols, it was stated that as fast as the brigade put the fire out Edols, who was the owner of the property, went about lighting other fires. If the brigade could not remove the owner from the premises, they would be placed in a difficult position. Could the Attorney General make a provision to meet a case like that?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The circumstances referred to by the member were those of a person not possessed of his proper faculties, and no laws were made except to apply to sane persons. Assuming a man to be sane and the laws made for sane people, was it not proper that the owner of the premises should be allowed to be on burning premises for the purpose of saving property, particularly documents that he might be possessed of? If a fire brigade had a general authority to clear everybody off the premises, the owner of the property would be turned out. He was not committed to the pro-

vision, but it was found in all Acts dealing with fire brigades.

Mr. Collier: The firemen would exercise their authority with discretion.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That was not an exceptional provision to make.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 60 to 65—agreed to.

Clause 66—Payment of expenses where house and property uninsured:

Mr. SCADDAN: This was a provision about which he disagreed with the Attorney General. But his objection had been met to a certain degree. He moved an amendment—

*That after the word "property," in line three of Subclause 2, the words "saved from destruction or damage by such fire" be inserted.*

If the property of a person who was uninsured was destroyed by fire, he should not be asked to pay the charges. A fire might take place on the premises of a person who was not insured, and the fire brigade might have rendered great service in saving the property next door. The person uninsured might be burnt out and lose everything, yet he was to be charged with the cost, while the person who received some benefit had nothing to pay.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The amendment must be considered by the Committee in the light of the amendments on the Notice Paper. A person was exempt from any liability where the property was of the value of £50 or under, and then there was a provision exempting £30 for the contents, making the amount £80 in all. The provision must therefore relate to property of considerable value. He had agreed where it could be shown that persons could not insure at reasonable rates, they should not be liable to any charge whatever, and there was the exemption of £80.

Amendment withdrawn.

Mr. SCADDAN moved an amendment that the following proviso be added to Subclause 2:—

*Provided also that the owner of the uninsured personal property, the full insurance value of which does not exceed thirty pounds, shall not be liable to pay or contribute to any expenses*

or charges under this or the preceding subsections.

Amendment passed.

Mr. SCADDAN moved a farther amendment that the following be added to Subclause 4 :—

*Subject, however, to the proviso in Subclause (2) of this section.*

Amendment passed.

Mr. SCADDAN moved a farther amendment that the following be added to the clause :—

*No charge shall be levied under this section if the owner or owners of the house or building or personal property satisfies the board that no insurance company carrying on business in the district would accept an insurance over such property at a reasonable rate. The decision of the board as to what constitutes a reasonable rate shall be final.*

Amendment passed ; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 67 to 77 (end)—agreed to.

New Clause :

Mr. TAYLOR moved that a new clause be added to enable volunteer fire brigades in municipalities to have the option of adopting or not adopting the provisions of the Act. He moved this particularly at the request of the Mount Morgans brigade, which was managed on an economical scale, and was afraid that if compelled to come under the Act its expenses would be considerably increased. The Attorney General had been good enough to draft the new clause.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL, although he did draft the new clause at the hon. member's request, could not support it, because it would be for the good of every country brigade to come under the provisions of the Act, as they would thereby receive financial assistance to a greater extent than at present.

Mr. HOLMAN: It would be a great advantage for such brigades to come under the Act, as at present the Government did not contribute to country fire brigades except as a subsidy added to whatever amount was collected locally. But by coming under the provisions of

this Bill, the Government would supply one-fourth of the contributions, the insurance companies three-eighths, and the local municipality three-eighths ; thus enabling country brigades to be on a much better footing financially than had been the case hitherto. If the brigade at Mount Morgans had any property which the members did not wish to hand over to the new board of control, they should be careful to remove that property before the Act came into operation.

Clause put and negatived.

Schedule:

On motions by the Attorney General, the names and boundaries of Fire Districts were amended in accordance with the amendment made in Clause 4, for amalgamating the Central and Northern Districts as first defined in the Bill.

Schedule as amended agreed to.

Second Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments ; the report adopted.

## BILL—NARROGIN-WICKEPIN RAILWAY.

### Second Reading.

Resumed from the 5th November.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) : I never enjoy the prospect of making a second-reading speech, and I have never felt less pleasure in doing so than to-night ; for I feel more like going to bed than anything else, and I know I shall be speaking to members who are looking forward to getting away. In speaking to-night, I feel the responsibility is on me to outline exactly what I gathered from a personal inspection of the proposed railway. If I die in the attempt I will outline those opinions. In speaking in direct opposition to the proposal of the Premier for the second reading I want members to realise I am not doing it in any party spirit nor have I any interests of any description in this locality, but because I am satisfied that the proposal of the Government is against the best interests of this State. I am also backed up in my opinion by an overwhelming majority of settlers in

the Wickepin agricultural area. They have presented a petition praying this House to protect them against the proposed action of the Government to build a line that will not serve them in any shape or form. I am also influenced to oppose it by the personal inspection I made. Representations were made to me that the Government proposal was not a sound one, that it was against the best interests of the country and the farmers of this particular locality, and in order to ascertain for myself as to whether the Government were right or the settlers were right I took the responsibility of going over the route and thoroughly investigating it. There was a counter petition from the Narrogin people, asking the House to support the Ministry in their proposal. I want to express my extreme regret at the Premier's want of knowledge in connection with these petitions. He stated distinctly, when introducing the Bill at the second reading stage, that we had a petition from Narrogin and one from Cuballing. That was absolutely incorrect, for we had no petition from Cuballing. He stated that there were rival starting points, namely, Narrogin and Cuballing, and that the petitions were in favour either of one or the other. The petition from Narrogin was distinctly in favour of Narrogin being the starting point, but there was no other starting point suggested. The petition presented from the settlers of the Wickepin Agricultural Area did not propose in any shape or form that Cuballing should be the starting point.

*The Minister for Works:* You ought to read the file.

Mr. JOHNSON: I know what was presented to the House and it is no use the Minister for Works trying to mislead in this direction. There are no two starting points under consideration. The people did not petition the House on the relative merits of any particular starting point. The petition from Wickepin merely set out that the proposal from Narrogin was not a sound one, that it was a wrong one, and they prayed Parliament to appoint a competent board of experts to go into the question

to ascertain where the starting point should be to serve the best interests of the State and the settlers. A map has been produced showing that other starting points have been suggested, namely, Cuballing, Popanyinning, and Pingelly. I am of opinion that the correct starting point is Pingelly, but I have never voiced this opinion before, for all I wanted was to have that full investigation which the Premier promised when introducing this Bill last session.

*The Premier:* I did not introduce it last session.

Mr. JOHNSON: Well, the session before last. Provision was made on the Loan Estimates, and the Premier said the Bill would not be introduced before an inquiry was made. We know that the measure was held over for inquiry. We have been told that inquiries were made. Perhaps inquiries of a fashion were made but not what we should have on a proposition to spend such a sum of money as the proposal represents. I want to draw members attention to the fact that the late honorary Minister, Hon. C. A. Piesse, met a deputation in Narrogin, and on that occasion distinctly promised a full investigation and inquiry. He admits that he made that statement distinctly on behalf of the Government and told the Premier on his return to Perth from the Narrogin show that he had made the promise. He now states distinctly that the inquiry has never been made. Yet we have the Premier saying inquiries had been made.

*The Premier:* I say they have been made.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am prepared to agree, after making an investigation, that Mr. Piesse is correct. The Premier will say, "What about the visit of Mr. Stoddart?" I took exception previously to the appointment of a subordinate officer to make an investigation on behalf of Parliament. This investigation was not on behalf of the Ministry, for the Bill was held up in order that the investigation should be made for Parliament, and what do we find? A surveyor of the Works Department, certainly a competent man in his own particular line, does the work.

*The Minister for Works* : What is his particular line ?

Mr. JOHNSON : He is a surveyor in the Works Department.

*The Minister for Works* : He is a railway surveyor, and you know it.

Mr. JOHNSON : It makes no difference. A surveyor can do all kinds of survey work, that connected with railway construction as well as other kinds. He is a surveyor of the Public Works Department, and a subordinate officer. If the Government had selected Mr. Muir, the Engineer for Surveys, I would have been bound to admit they had selected an officer thoroughly competent, and one Parliament could place some reliance in. I am not here to cast aspersions on the ability of Mr. Stoddart, for I have absolute confidence in him as a surveyor, but he has not had the experience for the work.

*The Premier* : Who says he has not had experience ?

Mr. JOHNSON : Will the Premier argue that a subordinate officer should be selected to take upon his shoulders a responsibility such as the construction of this line entails ? It is unfair, as I stated previously, to the officer and distinctly wrong to the country and to Parliament. What did Mr. Stoddart do ? He did not make investigations in connection with this proposal. The Premier says investigations were made but I say they were not made. It is true that Mr. Stoddart went to Narrogin and was driven by Mr. Johnston along the road for five or six miles and in some places seven miles from the surveyed route out to the Wickepin Agricultural Hall. He went from there to Cuballing and never interrogated any of the settlers nor made inquiries, yet he came back and endorsed the action of the Government that the line should start from Narrogin, and go hence to Wickepin. It was wrong to appoint an officer without giving him definite instructions that the investigations should be thorough and complete, and that he should visit the settlers and get all the information from them he possibly could.

*The Premier* : Mr. Stoddart was surveying railways here before you arrived in this State.

Mr. JOHNSON : I resent this constant reference to the fact that we are not all born West Australians. I have as much interest here as the hon. member has, and I take as much interest in the agricultural industry.

*The Premier* : You say Mr. Stoddart had no experience. Is it not experience when he has been surveying railways since before you arrived in this State ?

Mr. JOHNSON : Because Mr. Stoddart rides along a road for six miles, is that making an investigation ? Why did he not do as I did, and go thoroughly into the question, ride along the route of the railway and ascertain the class of land in the locality ? That was not done, and yet we have this officer coming back and reporting in favour of this Government proposal. The Government policy included a Narrogin-Wickepin railway. The Government, realising that they had not sufficient information to enable them to place the Bill before Parliament, after they had definitely announced their policy sent a subordinate officer to drive over the road six miles from the railway, and then come back and report in favour of their proposition. This is enough to make members pause, if they do not intend to vote on distinctly party lines. I know it is difficult to get a vote except on party lines, and I quite anticipate that this Bill will be passed ; but it should not be passed on the information before us to-night. Mr. Stoddart's report is not complete ; his inquiry was not made as an inquiry should be made on behalf of Parliament. The Premier will refer to the fact that Mr. Johnston, a man with a ripping good name, makes a similar report in connection with the proposition. I have full confidence in Mr. Johnston as a land guide and a land agent. But he is a very enthusiastic officer. He is an impulsive young man. And we have to bear in mind that this young man, of an impulsive nature, is living amongst the Narrogin people. They are always rubbing shoulders with him, and the Narrogin scheme is continually forced under his notice. I say without hesitation that

his very enthusiasm and his environment have blinded his judgment, and he has made a report not in accordance with the actual facts concerning the land to be served by this railway. Let us read some of his statements :—

“ Speaking with six years’ experience of the several districts along the Great Southern Railway from Katanning to Pingelly, with which I have been intimately associated, I say that no railway proposal can be put forward in these districts offering greater advantages to the State in regard to providing land of the quality required, with areas limited practically only by the distance to which the Government will extend the line, and capable of providing homes for many hundreds of settlers, than does the Narrogin-Wickepin proposition on the surveyed route.”

The Premier must know that to be an exaggerated statement, and the members representing the district must know that the land around Narrogin does not compare in any way with the land around Pingelly. It is recognised that the land around Narrogin is poor.

*Mr. Cowcher* : It is decidedly good.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is all very fine for the member for the district to say it is good. It is recognised that the land around Narrogin is not equal to the land around Pingelly.

*Mr. Cowcher* : Allow me to know more about the land than you.

Mr. JOHNSON: We get too much of this “allow me to know a little more than you.” There are other members in the House who have a few years’ experience of Western Australia, and can discriminate between good land and bad. I will ask the member for the district why is it that the land near Narrogin on this surveyed route, twelve or thirteen miles from Narrogin, has not been selected.

*Mr. Cowcher* : Why has the land east of Cuballing, out on the plains, not been selected?

Mr. JOHNSON: How much land is vacant twelve or thirteen miles east or west of Pingelly, improved or unimproved? You will have to pay a fairly stiff price for it. I know what I am speaking of, because I have made inquiries

about land around Pingelly, which look upon as one of the best districts along the Great Southern line. The member for the district states that the Pingelly land is not superior to the land around Narrogin. When I asked why is the land selected east from Pingelly thirty miles out, and ten miles beyond Narrogin, the land is not selected unless it has been selected within the last twelve months, I cannot tell me. Land lying ten miles from the Great Southern railway has been lying idle for years, and it has not been selected.

*Mr. Smith* : There may be a small section vacant.

Mr. JOHNSON: In that district you will find five thousand acres of poor land to one thousand acres of good land.

*Mr. Smith* : The hon. member must have been looking at the worst land.

Mr. JOHNSON: I did nothing of the sort. I went through the mallet-bush ridges and the box-poison country for miles; but I did not limit my investigations to those ridges and to the box-poison land.

*Mr. Smith* : You must have got twisted round.

Mr. JOHNSON: I was born in the bush, and did not twist round. I made a thorough investigation, and I say I can find little gullies of good land along the proposed route of this railway; for every thousand acres of good land, one will get in these gullies, five thousand acres of bad land, inferior land, will be found—land on which it would be an absolute crime to settle people. I can realise there is some truth in the statement of the land agent at Narrogin that settlers are taking up this land. But I know that we have settlers taking up land in such localities at 10s. an acre; and after fencing it, they go to the Agricultural Bank, which values the land at 10s. an acre; and then to their sorrow the settlers find they cannot live on the land which they have to abandon. That happened around Narrogin, as the member for the district knows full well.

*Mr. Cowcher* : Has it never happened anywhere else?

Mr. JOHNSON: It happened in other places, but to a greater extent around



Narrogin than in any other agricultural district.

Mr. Smith : That is not so.

Mr. JOHNSON : And yet we find that is enthusiastic young man, twenty-five years of age according to *Hansard*, goes to the extent of saying that the land proposed to be served by this railway is equal if not better than the land around Katanning and around Pingelly. I will not discuss the relative merits or demerits of Narrogin against Katanning, but I am prepared to cross swords with anybody who will compare the Pingelly land with the Narrogin land. Conclusive evidence of the superiority of the Pingelly land is that land has been taken up thirty miles from Pingelly to the east, and to the west has been taken up still farther; while around Narrogin you can get hundreds of thousands of acres to-day ready for selection. The investigation did not go to the extent I desired. We have the statements made by this young and enthusiastic officer, influenced by the Narrogin people with whom he associates every day. No doubt he has interests in Narrogin, and his enthusiasm and his interests have clouded his judgment. I am not prepared to take as absolutely conclusive evidence the report of the land agent at Narrogin. At the Premier takes up another remarkable stand.

*The Minister for Works* : Why not discontinue Mr. Paterson's views on the subject?

Mr. JOHNSON : I am coming to that. That is the most remarkable thing that has ever been done in the history of Parliament. We have Mr. Stoddart sent down to the district, and we have a petition presented to Parliament. On the discussion of that petition the Minister for Works and the Premier stated that Mr. Stoddart had made a report. Mr. Stoddart's report is criticised to a limited extent by me and by other speakers. But the Government said, to use the Premier's own words when moving the second reading, "To make assurance doubly sure we appointed three experts—the Surveyor General, the manager of the Agricultural Bank, and the engineer of the Public Works Department."

*The Minister for Works* : If you refer to the Premier's speech, you will see that this investigation was prior to the motion of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Butcher).

Mr. JOHNSON : There is no date given ; and if you read the Premier's remarks you will find anyone might draw the conclusion that the inquiry was made after the discussion of the petitions.

*The Minister for Works* : Look up the Premier's speech in last session *Hansard*, and you will see that the board reported prior to the member for Gascoyne's motion.

Mr. JOHNSON : All I say is that the Premier's statement deals with Mr. Stoddart's report, then with Mr. Johnston's, the land agent's, report, and then says, "To make assurance doubly sure we appointed three experts."

*The Minister for Works* : The board was not the outcome of the member for Gascoyne's motion.

Mr. JOHNSON : I thought it was, but I am glad to know that it was appointed previously. The Premier states that these three experts were appointed. I shall not read any more of their report, except these words : "After careful consideration of the engineer's report and the proposed routes of the railway extending eastward from Narrogin or Cuballing." In other words, these gentlemen are reporting on the inquiry of Mr. Stoddart, not on the proposition itself.

*The Minister for Works* : Continue that quotation, and you will find they mention their personal knowledge of the district.

Mr. JOHNSON : The Premier asserted his personal knowledge of the locality. He was surveying there years ago but that experience is of no value to the House. The conditions of to-day are not the conditions of years ago. Mr. Paterson and the Surveyor General make the same statement, that they have personal knowledge gained years ago, not to-day, and they are of a certain opinion. But they begin the report by saying, not that after a thorough investigation of the circumstances, of the land and of the merits of the different propositions, they have arrived at a certain conclusion, but that they have come to a conclusion after con-

sideration of the engineer's report. They did not visit the locality; they did not ascertain the views of the settlers; did not do any work except peruse the engineer's report and then report in favour of the engineer's conclusion. That itself is bad enough. But a thousand times worse is the continual introduction into this proposition of the relative merits of Cuballing and Narrogin as starting points. I shall not discuss that question. But it is quite possible that the engineers and experts will say that Narrogin is a better proposition than Cuballing. I am not here to champion Cuballing and I do not know that any other member has done so, but it suits the Minister to bring up this proposition and argue every time Cuballing *versus* Narrogin or Narrogin *versus* Cuballing; why? Because their proposition as compared with the Cuballing proposition is in their opinion better. I do not want to argue from that point of view. I do not wish the House to be misled into a belief that it is a question of two rival routes. It is true we had an agitation for the route from Narrogin and an agitation for the route from Cuballing. But we had also an agitation from Pingelly, and a deputation from Pingelly waited on the Minister. Why is it that the Ministry always argue the case of Narrogin *versus* Cuballing? Why not cast their eye a little farther, to the port of Fremantle, and determine the relative merits of Fremantle and Albany? I ask this, because the Premier told me definitely in his second-reading speech that it was a question of Cuballing *versus* Narrogin. I did not wish to discuss the rival routes. All I did was to ask for a competent board of experts to go into the question, to see whether we could not get a better starting point at Narrogin. The Wickepin settlers, the people most interested, the people who have a better knowledge of the locality than Mr. Stoddart, Mr. Johnston, or anybody, for they have been there for years, ought to know what they want. They gain their living in the district. They understand the proposition from A to Z, and consequently they said distinctly that the Narrogin proposition was wrong, that it would not be a paying

proposition, that it would not allow the to assist by their produce to make the line a paying proposition. These men who deserve every consideration at the hands of Parliament, have said that they will not cart their produce to send it to Bunbury, but that they will cart it to the Great Southern railway in order to send it to Fremantle, their natural port. When they presented their petition to Parliament it was praying Parliament to connect them with their natural port and not with the port of Bunbury. That was the crux of the question: whether the line should be connected with Bunbury. I have no hesitation in saying that the natural port of everything to the north-west of Narrogin is Fremantle. When we go farther down the natural port is Albany. It is all very well for the Premier to say in his speeches various places about Bunbury that in tapping this district they are going to bring the produce to Bunbury, to buy up and assist the port of Bunbury.

*The Premier:* If I knew as little about the matter as you do I would not say anything at all.

Mr. JOHNSON: But one can make investigations. We know that the Premier was born in the place, and that I was surveying there years ago, and that he has made a trip there, but I say my investigations were as complete and as exhaustive as those made by the Premier. I went and made inquiries, and cross-examined, and discussed matters with the settlers, who, after all, know as much about the relative values of the land at the different localities as the Premier. They have studied as to which is the natural port, and they have no hesitation in saying that they look to Fremantle as their natural port. It is the main, the principal port of Western Australia, and they want to be connected with the principal markets, Perth and Fremantle. They wanted a board appointed to go into the question of the possibility of the best proposition to bring them in closer connection with the main port, Fremantle, and the main markets, Perth and Fremantle. That was the prayer of the petition. But we find the Premier harping on the question

that we should build the line "to connect these people with their natural port," that is Bunbury, but it will never be their natural port. If this proposition is passed by this House the line will be a white elephant; it will never pay interest and sinking fund, let alone working expenses; and is it fair that we should be appealed to by the Ministry of the day to build a line of this description on the small amount of information we have received? We have had reports from officers who have never investigated, and the only argument from the Premier outside these reports is the fact that the line is going to connect these people with their natural port, Bunbury, though the people say it will never be their natural port. Mr. Potts, who lives within four miles of the proposed railway and about 16 miles from the Great Southern Railway, says that he will cart his produce from his farm to the Great Southern Railway, rather than put it on the line to take it to Bunbury.

Mr. Gordon: Mr. Potts has some other land.

Mr. JOHNSON: He has no land other than round his homestead. True he has a fair acreage there, but it is all within a fair radius of his homestead. Also we have Mr. Fairhead, who is closer to the railway than Mr. Potts; and Mr. Fairhead says distinctly that he cannot use this railway. Consequently I appeal to the House to realise that it is an important question when the settlers have appealed to us to give them an opportunity of making the railway a paying proposition. They say that if the Ministry persist in their intention to build the line from the Narrogin to the Wickepin Agricultural Area, they cannot use it, and consequently it will not be a paying proposition. The next point one touches in the Premier's speech, is the fact that certain settlers in the last year or two have been influenced to take up and in this locality, because the Government, in their policy, proposed to build a line from Narrogin to Wickepin. But what of the others who took up the land on the distinct statement of the officers of the Lands Department that

this line would go on the route on the plan from Cuballing out towards Mr. McBurnie's place, and the closer settled district of Landscape. The Premier says that he does not want to break faith with these new settlers, but he is between two fires. If he breaks faith with these new settlers and considers the other proposition, then he carries out a distinct promise that was made that the railway would go out in another direction; but if he keeps faith with the new settlers he breaks faith with the old settlers. There we have Mr. McBurnie, one of the best settlers that has ever come to the State. He brought capital and machinery, and a large family, and has done magnificent work about 25 or 26 miles from the Great Southern Railway. And what about Mr. Nalder, still farther out? He went out on the distinct understanding that the line would go within reasonable distance of his land. And are these men to be overlooked; are they to be ignored; is Parliament going to ignore their claims when a distinct promise was made? There is more in this proposition than appears on the surface. All I am sorry for is that the Ministry refused to have that inquiry that was promised by the Premier. After Parliament was appealed to by the settlers to protect them against the intentions of the present Ministry, I regret the Government did not consider the advisability of appointing competent officers to thoroughly investigate this proposition. Possibly there may be difference of opinion between the Premier and myself. The Premier may be of opinion that these agricultural railways should be built with the main intention of assisting land settlement, that they should be built to open up areas for settlement. If that is the intention of the Premier I am utterly opposed to it. I say these lines should be built to encourage those already on the land. If we read the Premier's speech on the second reading of this Bill it emphasises the fact that large areas have recently been surveyed and cut up and that the Premier wants these lands settled; but what about those poor unfortunates who have been

settled for some years and have been waiting for years the opportunity of transporting their produce by rail?

*The Premier:* Have not the Jewish settlers been there for years, and have they not done more work than any others in the locality?

*Mr. JOHNSON:* I resent that statement. I will bet that Mr. Potts produces more from his land than any in the Jewish settlement.

*The Premier:* This is not a betting saloon.

*Mr. JOHNSON:* I suppose it is illegal to bet here, but I made the assertion after investigation. I am prepared to admit the Jewish Settlement is an object lesson; it is something that one can become enthusiastic over, a sort of socialistic system where one man assists another, one assists another to plough and the other comes back and assists the first to sow; but more might have been done by the Jewish settlers than has been done to date. True they have done a certain amount of work, but compare the settlement at New Jerusalem with that on the other side of Wickepin, the closely settled Landscape settlement. I have no hesitation in saying that the better class of settler of the two is the one in the district known as Landscape. The Premier led me away from the point I was trying to make. If the Premier admits that in building agricultural lines it is his main consideration to encourage or increase land settlement, then I am prepared to realise we are arguing from different points of view.

*The Premier:* We do both by this line.

*Mr. JOHNSON:* We cannot. I will explain. I have not half finished yet. I want to explain that the land this line will serve has not been settled to date, though it is true it has been surveyed in order to get it settled; but my desire is to assist those settlers who have been on the Wickepin Area for the last 10 to 14 years, and have been struggling on with the desire to get better facilities in order to take their produce to market. Those are the men I want to see assisted. I want agricultural railways built to assist men already on the land, making that our first consideration, with the idea of in-

creasing land settlement as the second consideration. The Premier asks, "Is it not possible to combine the two by this proposition?" It is not. But if the Premier ran a line up from Pingelly through the Wickepin Agricultural Area he could go within a few miles, fair carting distance of the Jewish settlement, and would give the equally deserving settlers a Landscape an easy opportunity of carting to the railway; but the main thing is that it would go through the Wickepin country and would tap the country that is brought into the same position by the railway now proposed; and we would have the produce coming to Fremantle instead of Bunbury, which the Premier desires but which he will not get. On a previous occasion I referred to the nature of the land, and I have no hesitation in repeating that the land around Narrogin through which this survey route goes is distinctly inferior. It is what the agriculturists call spewy land. It is whit gum and sheoak country, and it is only at certain times of the year one can ride over it. The very fact that it has been lying idle for years in such close proximity to the Great Southern Railway demonstrates that it is absolutely inferior. One can ride for miles through this country and will only find here and there a man working in a gully doing a bit of cultivation between two hills. The hills are mostly covered by mallet bark. A great portion of our mallet bark has been taken from the hills. And one can go for miles and miles through box poison. Yet Mr. Johnston says that this is good land. I have no hesitation in saying that his judgment is unsound in that direction. It is distinctly inferior and it would be absolutely criminal to put people on it. If they are put on it they will not stay there very long. It is not fit for settlement. It is distinctly inferior land. I trust the House will realise these important points before they come to a conclusion in that direction. There is another consideration raised by the Premier. When I deal with this I shall conclude. The Premier has raised the point that the original intention was to take the line from Colton to Narrogin and then from Narrogin to the Goldfields Railway; and

states that this proposition will be portion of the proposed through line. Members must realise that an agricultural line cannot be a Collie coal line. The two are distinct and separate proposition. You cannot build an agricultural line and use it for the carriage of Collie coal. An agricultural line is by no means part and parcel of a heavy line. Let members realise that an agricultural line follows the contour of the country; there are no cuttings and no gullies filled up. What is the use of such line for heavy traffic? The first thing to do to make it a heavy line is to make the grades 1 in 80, the same as they are from Collie to Narrogin, therefore the line will have to be regraded. The rails will have to be taken up, they are no good because they are 45lb. rails. The rails between Collie and Narrogin are 60lb. rails, therefore these 45lb. rails are no good. The sleepers are no good because they are half round. The sleepers on the Collie-Narrogin line are either hewn or sawn jarrah sleepers; but an agricultural line is built on inferior sleepers; consequently such sleepers will be no good; they will have to be removed, and when they are removed the railway formation that has been made will have to be removed in order to make a proper formation for the heavy line. Therefore how is this railway going to be a portion of a through line? I know that argument influences a lot of members to vote for the proposition. They think there will be an opportunity of getting the produce from the Great Southern districts through to the goldfields without having to go *via* Spencer's Brook and Northam. We know of an agitation that has sprung up to connect the Wagin-Dumbleyung line with the proposed Narrogin-Wickepin line in order to bring Wagin and Katanning closer to the goldfields market; to place the people there in a better position to compete against Northam and the other districts now serving the goldfields market. These considerations are influencing members to vote against this proposition; but it should not influence them. They should consider the State. May I appeal to-night to members to realise that this is not a sound proposition. It will be a burden on the State. The settlers in the

district who know most about it have petitioned Parliament against it. They are opposed to it, and in the interests of the State they have asked Parliament not to build it. Consequently I make an appeal to members to put party considerations on one side and realise that the funds of the State are at stake. This line will cost £35,000 before it is completed, therefore we have £35,000 at stake. We are told by the settlers that this £35,000 will be wasted. We have no argument on the other side at all. The argument advanced by the Premier is only on the reports of the departmental officers who have not made a thorough investigation of this proposition. I appeal to members to cast aside party considerations and realise that this is not a no-confidence motion, but to vote for an inquiry. If we get an inquiry I will be satisfied to abide by the decision. No inquiry has been made that will convince members that this proposition is a sound one. In conclusion I wish to say, if members have any doubt in their mind, I appeal to them not to vote for the second reading of the Bill; delay the matter if you will, or even grant a select committee. Let us have an inquiry to determine once and for all whether we can honestly build this railway. Our agricultural lines I believe are good propositions; but there is no justification for going at the pace we are going now with them. We find the Government introducing Bill after Bill for this class of line. We have four on the Notice Paper to-day. We cannot get sufficient information about them. If this information we have is a fair sample of the information in relation to these other propositions, it is not sufficient for the House. After my experience in regard to this line I shall look with a good deal of suspicion on the reports of departmental officers in future. I defy the Premier to point out where there is any justification in the reports. Had he appointed the board to go thoroughly into the question and investigate, not to go into the question of Narrogin *versus* Cuballing, not to consider the question from the engineer's report, but to investigate the matter for themselves, then I would be satisfied.

*The Premier:* Mr. Johnson was down there last year, and Mr. Paterson is making advances down there every day.

Mr. JOHNSON: Mr. Paterson makes advances on the reports of responsible resident farmers in the locality. These farmers make an inspection and give a certificate as to the advances from the Agricultural Bank. On certain occasions I admit Mr. Paterson goes down, but he does not go there to make a thorough inspection of a railway proposition; he goes down as a rule to see settlers who have applied for assistance from the Agricultural Bank; but he makes no inspection whatever from a railway point of view.

*The Premier:* But he knows the country.

Mr. JOHNSON: Not sufficiently to make a report. An officer should go down there for the purpose of examining the country. We do not want second-hand statements on which to pass this line. Because the engineers make certain statements, that is not conclusive evidence. The Premier states that the line is timbered by salmon gum and mallet. I went through that country and can tell members that the majority of the land that will be served by the railway is covered with white gum and she-oak. Then the Premier said the line will stop at Wickepin. It does not stop at the Wickepin area at all. It goes into the Yarling reserve a few chains from the corner of the Wickepin agricultural area. Yet we have the Premier stating, and one of the reports stating, that the terminus of the line will be at Wickepin. It will not be at Wickepin. It does not touch the Wickepin agricultural area. I am speaking of a locality which I know something about. It does not touch the Wickepin agricultural area at all. It is a misnomer to call this line the Narrogin-Wickepin line. The Premier states that the terminus is at Wickepin on a reserve; but it is not. It is on vacant land I admit; but the land is of such a nature that it will not pay anyone to take up. The district contains inferior land at the terminus of the line, and with few exceptions the survey passes through distinctly inferior land. It goes through that portion of the Jewish set-

tlement and other portions outside the Wickepin agricultural area containing fairly good land, and it goes through the land of certain settlers which is good, and there is a portion of good land in the Jewish settlement; but the line skirts by the bad area, and at the terminus the land is very inferior. I appeal to the House to realise that this is no party question. I have no axe to grind in any shape or form. Members should not be influenced by party feelings. I have no interest in this matter; but I have investigated the proposal and we shall be doing something detrimental to the interests of the State if we pass this Bill. We should do what we can in the best interests of the farmers.

Mr. G. S. F. COWCHER (Williams): I think the member for Guildford has interested himself a good deal in reference to this line. It appears to me he wishes to make the House believe that the people want Bunbury for their port. The people in this locality have told me that, provided the line goes in a north-easterly direction and in the direction of the goldfields line they will be quite satisfied. Mr. McBurnie was one of those who told me this three weeks ago. And not only Mr. McBurnie, but other people have told me that provided the line goes in that direction they will be perfectly satisfied. It does not matter if the Government or any Government in the future extend the line, the railway is bound to connect with the goldfields line. The people in this locality are looking for a market on the fields, or to bring their produce to Perth; they are not bound to Bunbury in any way. Then again, a great number of the people who sent in the petition in support of the Cuballing line are already served by the Great Southern Railway. It is not these people we want to serve, but the people in the back-blocks, the hon. member cannot deny that. I have no personal interests in Narrogin or Cuballing, or any town on the Great Southern Railway, but I believe that in the best interests of the people and the State, the line should be connected with the Collie-Narrogin line. There is all the necessary plant at the terminus for the line to con-

tinue, and it is in the interests of the country that it should be built. The hon. member made a great point about poor land. Members know that some of this country is poor land; but I may say that the hon. member must have been taken over the poorest country, because I can assure him there is good land there. I admit there are certain patches of poor land, but there is an enormous area of good land. A lot of the land has been surveyed and cut up, and people are only waiting to take up the land as soon as the line has been decided on. I feel sure that the route proposed by the Government is the correct route, and one that will serve the interests of the State best, and I hope members will support it. We quibble about the matter now and to try and hang it up will not be in the interests of the people of the State. We are not considering the coal mines now, but the people in the back blocks. Right out to the Jewish settlement and farther on I have spoken to settlers, and they have told me they will be perfectly satisfied provided the line will be continued in a north-easterly direction. Mr. McBurnie told me that within 10 miles east there is good land, and that will take us 32 miles east of the Great Southern Railway. The line will serve a 15 miles radius east of the Collie-Narrogin line, and 15 miles of the Great Southern Railway, and another 20 or 30 miles from that, and if the line is continued in a north-easterly direction it will open up that country and all the country within the rainfall area, and the line could then be continued on to the goldfields line. I feel sure that in supporting the line proposed by the Government members will be doing the right thing. The hon. member has spoken of his knowledge of the land, but I also claim to know something of the district; and I may say farther that I know of no objection being taken to the line proceeding in the direction surveyed. Much of the land referred to by the hon. member as within the Wickepin Area is within the twelve-miles radius of the Great Southern Railway, and not more than two miles from the surveyed route of this line; amongst others, Mr. Farey's property. [Mr.

Johnson : He is opposed to this proposition]—Mr. Holdaway's, Mr. Hayes's, and Mr. Louis Smith's. Those are the oldest settlers in that vicinity, having been settled there for many years, while others in the vicinity have settled there only during the past few years. Mr. Holdaway and other settlers to the north will be within the 12-mile limit, but we should consider those settlers farther back whom the line as proposed in the Bill will serve. It is certain that in the near future this line will be extended northerly. In the interest of those outback settlers and the State generally, I trust members will support the Government proposal.

Mr. A. C. GULL (Swan) : I cannot but admire the interest and enthusiasm with which the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) has addressed himself to this question; but I cannot help feeling that in his reference to this part of the country he was wide of the mark on many occasions. When railway construction in this district was first mooted, a rivalry sprang up as to routes, and has been maintained, between Narrogin and the stations above the point on the Great Southern Railway. I instance this merely to show the member for Guildford that throughout there has been an agitation by the Cuballing people that the line should start from Cuballing instead of Narrogin; therefore whatever force there might be in the petition the hon. member speaks of, it must be discounted in view of the known dissatisfaction of the Cuballing people. The Collie-Narrogin line was originally undertaken, not so much for the development of land settlement in the Narrogin district, for we had not at that time arrived at a proper estimate of the producing value of the land in that district, but primarily with a view to its ultimate junction with the Eastern Goldfields railway. Now that the first section of that line has been constructed, its continuation to the point of intended junction must be kept in view for the conveyance of coal from Collie to the goldfields. I have no desire to quarrel with the hon. member's estimate of the value of the land at different points along the Great Southern Railway. I know the land in

the Pingelly district to be good ; but Pingelly does not at all come into the consideration of this railway, because it is not urged that this line is necessary in order to give the people of Pingelly and the country to the eastward a closer market, but that it should be continued towards its ultimate objective, a junction with the goldfields line. When it comes to a question of the relative values of land, however, I question the hon. member's knowledge on the point. I have always recognised the land in the vicinity of Narrogin as one of the best agricultural areas in the State. In this regard the Katanning area is much quoted, but I say unhesitatingly that the land around Narrogin is far superior to that of Katanning. [*Member* : You should tell that to the member for Katanning.] I would tell it to that hon. member, were he present. I lived in the Narrogin district for many years, and it was a sore point with us that we could not get the Narrogin Area thrown open for selection whilst at Katanning every inducement was offered to settlers. It may be that the Government of the day wished to get one area going thoroughly before attempting to open up another. I do not know the reason, but I do know that the Narrogin Area was kept closed to selection while other areas were open. [*Mr. Johnson* : A good job for selectors.] I say again that I would sooner take up land in the vicinity of Narrogin than any land in the Katanning Area. [*Mr. Johnson* : I was arguing in favour of Pingelly.] I have pointed out that Pingelly does not enter into the question in connection with this railway Bill. It is all very well to say it would be preferable to the people of Pingelly if the continuation of this railway were made through that district, thus bringing it closer to Fremantle ; but that is not the point. [*Mr. Johnson* : That is the point.] The aim of this line is not merely the settlement of the land, but an ultimate connection with the goldfields line ; therefore to urge that the construction of the railway is necessary for the purpose merely of making Bunbury the port of shipment for these producing districts is absolute nonsense. Even admitting that contention for a moment,

it means that the people of these districts will be given not only a port at Bunbury, but also at Albany and Fremantle, and so may make their choice between the three. If Bunbury is their natural port and they find it convenient and cheaper to send their produce there, doubtless they will do so. But it is sheer nonsense to argue that this line is to start from Narrogin merely to make Bunbury the port of these districts.

*Mr. Johnson* : The Premier stated that.

*The Premier* : I said Bunbury was the nearest port.

*Mr. GULL* : Naturally the Premier would say that, and there is no reason why the member for Guildford or even I should not say the same. But the fact remains that the people of these districts have a choice of three ports. If they consider Bunbury their natural port, they will send their produce thither ; if they do not, they have the option of sending it elsewhere. This is not a question of a line to serve Pingelly and the country to the eastward, but of continuing the line from Collie to Narrogin with a view to junctioning with the goldfields railways, at the same time opening up as much agricultural country as possible *en route*. It is idle to say that there has been no movement amongst the Cuballing people, because I have been interviewed with the precincts of this House by influential men from Cuballing who have endeavoured to influence me to vote against this Bill, urging that the line ought to go *via* Cuballing. That is an absolute fact ; and I think that the member for Guildford knows that those people were here trying to influence votes in favour of their route.

*Mr. Johnson* : No one has approached me in that way.

*Mr. Bath* : There were also people from Narrogin.

*Mr. GULL* : That is so ; the usual thing, the battle of the routes. But when the Cuballing people found they could not get their own route, they threw in their weight to support the alternative route *via* Pingelly. I say again, Pingelly does not enter into consideration in this question, and should not be dragged into it.



I have no desire to unnecessarily take up time; but as I have said, I have known this country for many years. The member for Guildford seemed to infer, or rather said so directly, that the knowledge gained by the Premier of this land twenty years ago, or the knowledge that I or anyone else gained years ago, was useless to-day because the conditions have so altered. If a man entertained a favourable opinion of that land twenty years ago, that opinion must be greatly enhanced to-day. I know it to my sorrow that when clearing land years ago in that district I left uncleared portions which experience has proved to be the best of the land, and I cleared that which is now recognised as of least value. The introduction of manures into this country has created an entire change in the values of land. In those days we had no manures; we picked the heaviest timbered land we could find, the deepest and heaviest soil, with the result that it lay wet and cold; and the land we neglected, when I went back to that district years afterwards, was seen to be carrying crops three times as heavy as those raised on the land which in mistake I and others had previously supposed to be the best in the district. If any man formed a good or even a fair opinion of the land in those districts 20 years ago, his opinion to-day would be a great deal better than that formed twenty years ago.

Mr. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): I regret to notice in this as in other railway proposals, the issue raised is not so much the consideration of the settlers in the outlying area, who are perhaps entitled to a railway, as the disputes which arise between contending points along the prospective routes. It seems that when railway proposals are submitted, instead of considering the interests of settlers proposed to be served, the question at once develops into a dispute over routes. Rival parties are formed, and these appoint each a president, a vice-president, a secretary, and a committee; they issue literature bearing on the claims of their respective districts; send deputations to Perth to lobby members of Parliament, and before months elapse the whole question hinges on the agitation of rival cen-

tres already served by railway communication and whose interests are really a matter of secondary consideration.

Mr. Butcher: Rival starting points.

Mr. BATH: After all it is absolutely wrong in any railway proposals for the members of this House to keep the question of the rival starting points before their mind to the entire exclusion of the interests of those to be served. In this proposal I think, the people to be considered are the settlers around the Wickepin line, those who will be served by the line; and if they protest against the proposed route for the railway in this Bill, it is a matter for the inquiry of members as to whether the proposal is in their best interests. I have had communications from the settlers in the Wickepin Area in which they strongly condemn the proposal in the Bill, and say that it is in no sense in the interests of Wickepin settlers, but is due to the fact that one particular place on the railway has been able to bring more influence to bear than another. The member for Williams (Mr. Cowcher) has not shown himself to be one of the best friends of the railway proposition, for he says those settlers who used to be opposed to the route have been induced to see the error of their ways. How has that been accomplished, however? Their opposition has been removed by a vague promise—I do not know whether it was the member for Williams who made it—that some day the country is going to build a network of railways which may include them in its scope, like a fly in a spider's web. As this proposal to construct a network of railways will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, I think it is a peculiar stretch of the imagination that the people should be told the Bill should be supported because in the future some of these great railways will be built near them.

Mr. Cowcher: The greatest number of those who are in opposition to the Bill live within 12 miles limit of the Great Southern railway.

Mr. BATH: In the petition submitted to the House there were the names of many settlers living beyond the limit stated by the hon. member.

*The Minister for Works:* If you look at this map you will not say that.

*Mr. BATH:* I have seen it.

*The Minister for Works:* Have you seen the map which shows the places where the people who signed the petition live?

*Mr. BATH:* We have had more than one petition here, and if it comes to a question of giving interesting details about petitions, one could furnish quite a number of them. I object to the site for a railway for an outside body of settlers being made a question of rival starting points for the railway. I do not care a red cent as to which place along the Great Southern Railway is chosen, as I have no interest in one point more than another; but I desire to see the interests of the outside settlers preserved. They should be considered, and I protest against this route. Without doubt the question is one for careful investigation. We may build other lines in the future; but those mentioned by the member for Williams would run into a considerable sum of money, and could not be undertaken without most serious consideration and the fullest possible investigation. In deciding these railways, it should be a question purely and solely as to a line going through the area proposed to be served, and not a question of a problematical extension or a network of railways in the future. While I am anxious to see communication given to those settlers, I would support a proposal by which an investigation should be held as to the best route, without serving the interests of Narrogin, Cuballing, or Pingelly.

*Mr. Gull:* Would not a continuation from Collie suit you?

*Mr. BATH:* No; for the arguments concerning that do not carry a great deal of weight. For instance with the opening up of the line to Norseman, the goldfields mines will be able to supply themselves with good fuel for many years at a cheaper rate than could be supplied from Collie, even if the line were run through. That consideration cannot have much weight in this proposition. There will not be a demand for fuel from Collie by the goldfields for many years to come, as the mines will be able to get fuel

cheaper up there. After all, it boils down to this. We have this body of settlers and the question is which route will serve them, not which route will serve the points along the Great Southern Railway.

*The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price):* I desire to make one or two observations on this Bill. I would like to controvert the statement of the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) that this route from Narrogin suits the Ministry. The route has not been selected with the idea of suiting the Ministry at all. We have endeavoured to select the best route for the people settled in that locality. We approached this question with an open mind, and as the result of investigations, have come to the opposite conclusion to that arrived at by the member for Guildford. I think that sometimes when dealing with a question such as this, the hon. member is too prone to take upon himself the role of special pleader. He has told us there has never been any serious question as to running a railway from Cuballing out to the Wickepin Area. While this route agitation has been under way, we have had two petitions, the one being to the House and the other to the Government. The signatories to each were pretty much the same. The petitions I refer to came from the Cuballing district and for the information of the member for Guildford, I would like to read the prayer of the petitioners in the first of them. It says, "We the undersigned residents of Cuballing and Wickepin most humbly ask you to consider the advisability of having an early survey made from Cuballing eastward to the Wickepin Area," and the petition winds up, "We have no hesitation in urging upon you the superiority of the land, also the grades, of the route we propose." We have had a petition in which it is as strongly urged that the route should be from Narrogin to Wickepin.

*Mr. Johnson:* That petition does not mention Cuballing.

*The MINISTER FOR WORKS:* It does. I have just read the petition.

*Mr. Johnson:* You are talking about the Narrogin petition.

The MINISTER: I am talking about the Cuballing petition. Now we come to the last petition we have received and the Leader of the Opposition has just stated we have to consider these people. I think if he were to study this map I hold in my hand, which indicates the positions of the holdings of the various signatories to the last petition, it would be manifest to him that a great bulk of the petitioners are interested neither in the railway from Cuballing to Wickepin nor in the railway from Narrogin to Wickepin. As a matter of fact, they are outside the sphere and influence of either of these lines. A majority of the signatories are barely worthy of consideration. Some of them actually reside on the western side of the Great Southern line. Their holdings are there and they cannot be interested. This map shows at once that the petition upon which the member for Guildford sets so much weight is signed by individuals who would be in no way influenced or harmed, whether the railway is constructed from Cuballing or Narrogin, out to the Wickepin Area. These people are only "bar-racking" for the route, and in all probability the great majority of them will not use the line at all. As to Mr. Stoddart, the member for Guildford referred to him constantly and tried to discount his report by saying he was a subordinate officer. Mr. Stoddart is not a subordinate officer.

*Mr. Johnson:* He is; for Mr. Muir is the officer in charge.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member would lead members to believe Mr. Stoddart was one of the youngest surveyors in the office. As a matter of fact that officer is not classed in with the surveyors at all, for he has a separate title of his own. You will find him referred to on the Estimates as "Chief Engineering Surveyor." He is next in charge of the railway surveys to Mr. Muir, the Engineer for Surveys. He has a great number of men under him; and as Mr. Muir was not available for this work, he was the officer appointed to undertake it. I venture to say that if the member for Guildford spoke frankly, he would tell the House that Mr. Stoddart is a perfectly competent officer to

undertake the report he was asked to give.

*Mr. Johnson:* He did not make an investigation.

The MINISTER: I say he did. The instructions given to him were perfectly clear, for he had to investigate both routes. He went over the two routes and reported. Subsequently to that the Premier submitted this matter to a board consisting of Mr. Paterson, the manager of the Agricultural Bank, Mr. Stoddart, Engineering Surveyor, and Mr. Johnston, who had been the Lands representative in that district. When the member for Guildford read out the finding of the board, he carefully omitted to quote, until I pulled him up, some words in that finding which showed that the report was drawn not only with due regard to the report of Mr. Stoddart, the engineer who had inspected the country, but with regard also to the personal knowledge of those three officers.

*Mr. Johnson:* When did they gain that personal knowledge? They made no inspection.

The MINISTER: When did they gain it? Take Mr. Paterson. I do not suppose there is an agricultural district in Western Australia with which Mr. Paterson is not thoroughly acquainted, such acquaintance being of the most recent date. He is constantly travelling through the country, advising his Minister whether loans should be granted on properties. And yet the hon. member asks when did Mr. Paterson gain his acquaintance with that country. The hon. member would pit his knowledge against Mr. Paterson's, against Mr. Johnston's, and against the Premier's, who I believe has been many times over this country. Whenever the Government propose to construct such railways, there are differences of opinion as to the route. What are we to do? Is the House to accept the dictum of the member for Guildford, or to accept the impartial opinion of these public officers who reported on the project?

*Mr. Johnson:* Let us have an independent board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I will not allow the hon. member to indulge in these continuous interjections. Interjections

are becoming altogether too frequent. The hon. member made a long and loud speech which was listened to with great attention, but he does not reciprocate when other members are speaking. He must do so. If he disobeys my instruction, I will order him out of the Chamber.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS :** I was drawing attention to reports which the Government received on these points. I am quite certain the hon. member absolutely believes the statement he makes to this House, and I have not the slightest doubt that in his own mind he is convinced that the route from Narrogin out to the fringe of the Wickepin area is not the best that can be selected. But I would ask him to examine his own mind; for I think it is possible he is biased, or his friends in the district may have had something to do with his belief in this particular route. It is not at all unlikely that he has an intimate acquaintance with some settler in that district, who strongly objects to the route selected, and to whose representations he is prepared to give undue weight. I wish to draw attention to the promise which Mr. C. A. Piesse gave to the deputation at Narrogin. Writing to the Premier Mr. Piesse remarked: "I promised that an inquiry would be made, and their representations would receive consideration at the hands of the Government." The reports in the *Morning Herald* and *West Australian* newspapers are not so explicit as this written communication to the Premier. The hon. member (Mr. Johnson) suggested that the promise made by Mr. Piesse was never redeemed by the Government. That is absolutely incorrect, in view of the investigation which Mr. Stoddart made, and also in view of the fact that the whole of this project was referred back again to a board. That is what I complain of in the hon. member's speech—his remarkable special pleading. It must be manifest to members there is nothing in his contention that the Government did not redeem the promise given by Mr. Piesse. It must be admitted that every opportunity was given for inquiry. Then, possibly thinking to set members by the ears, the hon. member drags in the relative merits of the ports of Fremantle,

Albany, and Bunbury, as ports serving this particular area. But consider the situations of Cuballing and Narrogin, and what do we find? The actual distance between these towns is some nine miles; and that distance will not make one port a more natural port for the district than the other port, will not outweigh the better facilities possessed by the bigger port, the port with the largest shipping trade. It is absolutely useless to drag in as a side issue the question of the port. I cannot help calling the attention of the House to the fact that at Narrogin we have the advantage of a water supply already provided: we have no water at Cuballing. At Narrogin also we have an existing junction. I do not think it is desirable that on the Great Southern Railway we should be constantly multiplying points from which spur lines branch off. I admit there is very good country at Cuballing; but other things being equal between the route from Cuballing and the route from Narrogin, it is desirable, in the interests of economical railway working, that the line should go out from Narrogin; and I feel perfectly satisfied that the House will endorse the proposition and the Bill which the Government have brought in.

**THE PREMIER** (in reply as mover): The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) is no doubt very earnest about any subject he takes up; and when he speaks he has the faculty of forcing members to give him a certain amount of attention. From the manner in which he has dealt with this question I am sure he is satisfied that he is on the right track. At the same time, I am perfectly satisfied that in adopting the proposals the Government have brought forward, the House will be doing the right thing. The hon. member states that in his opinion the railway should serve people already settled on the land, and that possibly I am considering the question with a view to opening up new country. I maintain that by adopting the proposed route both these objects will be achieved. As I pointed out when introducing the Bill, something like 200,000 acres of new country will be

thrown open for selection; and of this the report of the officer showed that practically three-quarters is to the south of the present terminus. Consequently it is in the best interests of the new country that the line should not be taken too far north. In regard to the suggestion that we should consider the construction of a line from Pingelly, I will draw the hon member's attention to the fact that from Pingelly the line would be running not exactly parallel to the Great Southern Railway, but in an ill-conditioned triangle. We should be building a long length of railway without opening up new country, for the simple reason that for twenty odd miles the line would run through country not more than twelve or fifteen miles from the Great Southern Railway. So I do not think that proposal will commend itself to anyone who has taken the trouble to investigate the question. I do not wish to traverse the arguments already used for and against this line. As to the constitution of the board, it was one in which I had the greatest possible confidence. It consisted of the Surveyor General, the Manager of the Agricultural Bank, and Mr. Stoddart, who is next to Mr. Muir in the Engineering Surveys branch. The hon. member took exception to Mr. Stoddart's report, in view of the fact that Mr. Stoddart had not the experience that Mr. Muir had. But Mr. Stoddart has been connected with the engineering branch of the Public Works Department for many years, and has acquired a large amount of experience. I recollect that years ago he was in charge of six parties on the survey of the Geraldton-Cue railway, and afterwards he had charge of the survey of the extension to Nannine. So hon. members will see Mr. Stoddart has had a great knowledge of engineering survey. Mr. Johnston in his report says that of the 140,000 acres of land now being cut up south of the latitude of the terminus, the increase in value may be estimated at £35,000, and that there is no reasonable prospect of this land, the survey of which is almost completed, being selected if the railway is taken to a more northern part of the

Narrogin-Wickepin district than is proposed by officers of the Public Works Department after a thorough inspection of the whole of the district. I do not wish to detain members. I can only say that I have a most intimate knowledge of the whole district. Though I have not had the opportunity of spending any length of time there during the last few years, 15 or 20 years ago I spent some time there and selected the whole of that district for the West Australian Land Company. From the experience I then gained and from the information I have obtained from the officers of the Works Department and the Lands Department, coupled with the experience of the settlers in the district, I am satisfied that the proposed route will serve the best interests of the people we are seeking to serve and the best interests of the State generally.

Question (second reading) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	27
Noes	..	..	..	5

Majority for ... .. 22

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Bath
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Holman
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. English	Mr. T. L. Brown (Teller).
Mr. Davies	
Mr. Draper	
Mr. Eddy	
Mr. Foulkes	
Mr. Gordon	
Mr. Gregory	
Mr. Gull	
Mr. Horan	
Mr. Keenan	
Mr. McLarty	
Mr. Mitchell	
Mr. Monger	
Mr. N. J. Moore	
Mr. S. F. Moore	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Stone	
Mr. Stuart	
Mr. Ware	
Mr. A. J. Wilson	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Layman (Teller).	

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes to 11 o'clock, until the next day at 2.30.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 12th December, 1907.

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returned to Assembly with suggested	
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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

## PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: Annual Report of the Public Works Department.

## BILL—GAME ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

## BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT.

*Machinery Measure—In Committee.*

Resumed from the previous day.

Clause 11—Exemption:

Hon. C. A. PIESSE had moved an amendment to Subclause 3, line 4—

*That the words "the unimproved value of which does not exceed one thousand pounds," be struck out.*

There appeared to be a misunderstanding as to the object in moving the amendment. As the clause was drafted it made it possible for the owner of an unimproved piece of land, the value of which did

not exceed £1,000, to obtain an exemption of £250. His object was to apply that exemption to the holders of unimproved land of a greater value than £1,000. It should be made to apply to all alike. If small holders were let off £250, let off large holders. When the unimproved value of land was worth £1,000 the improved value would be worth between £3,000 and £4,000. It would be quite possible, however, for a man to hold a piece of land the unimproved value of which was £1,000, and yet the improved value was only £1,100. The operation of the clause would not force a man to improve his land. It had been argued that the amendment clashed with the income tax; but it did nothing of the sort. If the unimproved value of a piece of land was £1,100, then the owner was barred from exemption although his improvements might be worth thousands of pounds.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon member lost sight of the fact that the Bill was one to impose a tax on land and income. He looked at it purely as if it were a Land Tax Bill. The amendment would not give relief at all to the man who improved his land. The Bill provided that all land used for agricultural purposes up to the unimproved value of £1,000 should have an exemption of £250. Now the member sought to strike out the £1,000 so that all holders would have an exemption of £250. But the £250 exemption would not give the holder of £2,000 worth of land any relief, because if the land was improved the income tax would necessarily exceed the land tax, therefore the exemption was no good.

Hon. F. Connor: Suppose the balance sheet showed a loss on the year's business?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was probable. The effect of the amendment would be not to give a penny relief to the man who worked his land, but in every instance it would give a £250 exemption to the holder of big unimproved blocks. Here was a case in point. Take the taxpayer who had a farm of the unimproved value of £2,000, that would probably be a property worth £6,000. We must assume, including his own labour, the owner made £800 a year; take £200 off, the exemption of the income tax,