

lying-in homes in which State children are placed will be open for inspection in the same way as the institutions kept by foster parents. These provisions, it is hoped, will largely tend to stamp out baby farming, which has unfortunately existed in the past in this State, though not perhaps to the same extent as in other States. Part IX. deals with procedure, penalties, and general provisions. These are the main features of the Bill, which makes ample provision for the neglected child from the time of its birth until it is able to do for itself. No child need be without a home, whether it be sent to a foster mother or to an institutional home. It is not to my mind so much a question of whether the Government should adopt the boarding-out system or send the children to an institutional home, or go in for both systems. The more important question is as to what degree the State should accept the whole responsibility for these children. Personally I cannot agree with much that has been said recently, that the State should accept without question every founding brought to it. I think it is right on the part of the Government to provide a home for every destitute or neglected child; but it appears to me just as much the duty of the Government to see that parents do not escape their responsibilities, both financial and social, for it is the duty of the parents to see that the child has a proper home. Ample provision, as I have said, is made for every child to receive a home; but on the other hand it is also provided that the parent or guardian shall not escape responsibility. I think I have touched on the principal provisions of the Bill, and if farther explanation be necessary I will readily afford it when the Bill is in Committee. I commend the Bill to the House and have pleasure in moving—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL, in moving the adjournment of the debate, requested that copies of the Bill now before members be replaced by others containing marginal references.

The Minister promised to bring the request under the notice of the Crown Law Department.

Motion passed, the debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT,

The House adjourned at 5.39 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 23rd October, 1907.

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

Prayers.

QUESTIONS — STORAGE OF WHEAT, ABATTOIRS AT NORTH FREMANTLE.

Mr. BOLTON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, What arrangements are being made for the export of wheat this year? 2, Is it the intention of the Government to advance on the wheat to the farmers and store such wheat until shipped? 3, If so, where will the wheat be stored? 4, Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the abattoirs, freezing chambers, and grading sheds at North Fremantle? 5, If so, is the matter now receiving consideration? 6, Has the site been definitely fixed?

The HONORARY MINISTER (Mr. Mitchell) replied: 1, Shed accommodation has been arranged for at Fremantle and Albany, and the necessary accommodation will be arranged for at Bunbury and Geraldton. 2, Yes. 3, Fremantle, Albany, Geraldton, and Bunbury. 4, The matter is now receiving attention. 5, Yes. 6, No.

QUESTION—SINKING FUND INVESTMENT.

Mr. STONE asked the Treasurer: 1, What amount of money is paid by this State on account of the sinking fund on loans borrowed on behalf of this State? 2, Has the Government considered the advisability of buying up Western Australian stocks with the proceeds of the sinking funds when the said stocks are cheap? 3, What is the accumulated sum from the said sinking fund to date? 4, Is the interest on the sinking fund invested, and if so, at what rate of interest?

The TREASURER replied: 1, Last year our Sinking Fund Contribution was £232,336. 2, Yes. All Sinking Fund contributions and Interest on investments made in connection with the Loans raised since Responsible Government was introduced have been, with the exception of £4,172, invested in the purchase of our own stocks. 3, The value of the securities held on the 30th June last by the Trustees was £1,685,197. 4, Yes. At rates paid by our 3 per cent., 3½ per cent., and 4 per cent. stocks, in which our investments are made.

BILL—ELECTORAL.

Second Reading

Resumed from the 17th October.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price): I desire to offer one or two observations in connection with this Bill, more especially because I was a member of the select committee appointed during the first session of this Parliament to inquire into the compilation of the rolls. The other members of that committee were the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker), who was chairman, the members for Ivanhoe (Mr. Seaddan), and Perth (Mr. H. Brown), and the then member for Leonora (Mr. Lynch). During the investigations of that committee, it became perfectly apparent that the methods provided in the old Electoral Act for the compilation of rolls were quite inadequate, and led to a most undesirable state of affairs. May I be allowed to

read some of the recommendations of that committee. One was as follows:—

“The officers of the Electoral Department examined by the committee are united in their condemnation of the provisions contained in the Electoral Act of 1904, as affecting the compilation of the rolls.”

Then again the committee came to this conclusion:—

“Your committee report that, in its opinion, the Revision Court is a totally inadequate means of keeping the rolls as a reliable registration of voters.”

In farther recommending fresh legislation to meet existing difficulties, the committee ventured a suggestion that the issue of electors' rights supplemented by a periodical electoral census should form the basis of a new law, especially providing for the compilation of the rolls. I think the member for Kanowna will bear me out when I say that I, and I fancy the member for Perth, did not endorse the proposal for electors' rights. I moved an amendment that those words be eliminated from the report, but subsequently withdrew it, on the assurance of the member for Kanowna that the action I had taken would be quite sufficient to signify my dissent from that method of enrolment. I am glad to see this Bill introduced for three reasons. 1, because it will prevent an undue inflation of the rolls; 2, because it does away with electoral revision courts as at present constituted; and 3, because it will have a tendency to leave the selection of members of Parliament absolutely to their electors. I frankly admit that I sit in this House as an individual selected from other candidates by an organisation, and that before a candidate was chosen upon, those desirous of submitting themselves for election underwent a preliminary selection. I was the selected individual for the Fremantle seat. I think other members occupy a similar position. We must all agree that it would be distinctly better if to the electors as a body was left the free and unfettered choice of a candidate. There is an influence which an organisation can bring to bear which is sometimes detrimental to getting the exact choice of the

electors. Half-a-dozen men get together, make a considerable fuss and noise, and are instrumental in selecting one individual to stand for a constituency.

Mr. Heitmann: Men such as the National League.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The method is not confined to one side or the other; and I say right here that any strictures I have to make on the compilation of rolls or the selection of candidates are not directed at any particular organisation. I frankly recognise that we are none of us free from blame in these matters, when elections are held at times of excitement; and I think it is well, when we have before us a Bill like this, that we should seriously and gravely consider the measure, without any heat, and should endeavour to secure a Bill which will provide pure rolls for the elections, in which a good many of us will hereafter take part. With reference to the inflation of the rolls, I have in my hand figures which show the state of affairs under the old Electoral Act. They refer to the district of Fremantle at the time of the 1904 general election; and I now use them as an illustration of the state of affairs which existed more or less all over the country. I find that in the Fremantle electorate there were then 5,254 voters on the roll; on the East Fremantle roll, 4,237; on the North Fremantle, 3,270; on the South Fremantle, 5,966; making a total number of names on the four Fremantle rolls of 18,727. That, to anyone who knew the district, is absolutely preposterous; and that the roll was unduly inflated is shown by the fact that on the 30th September of this year the numbers were: Fremantle, 2,069; East Fremantle, 2,792; North Fremantle, 1,662; South Fremantle, 3,536; or a total for the Fremantle district of 10,059 as against 18,727 three years ago.

Mr. Angwin: What was the cause of the inaccuracy in the first place?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am coming to the cause. In my opinion the trouble in the past has been this: Electors on the roll for a given district, say Kalgoorlie or Perth, on moving into a new district in which they wished to vote, instead of using transfers put in alto-

gether new claims. I have known many cases of electors on three rolls in this State. I remember before the electoral committee we had one witness who told us that he put in some 780 claims for a particular district; he put them in as new claims; and he was satisfied that at least three-fourths of the claimants should have applied for transfer.

Mr. Bath: That is because they could not find out whether or not they were on the roll.

Mr. Horan: The Government would not supply the necessary staff.

The MINISTER: No matter why it was. The effect of new claims being made instead of transfers being applied for was that the rolls became unduly inflated.

Mr. Bath: That was owing to bad administration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It may have been owing to bad administration: I do not care how it was. I submit that it will be much harder, even with bad administration, to bring about that state of affairs under the provisions of this Bill; and for this reason. We have here practically a variation of the system of electors' rights with which the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker), who was chairman of that select committee, was so enamoured, and for which I admit there is much to be said. Electors' rights are provided for in the Bill; but instead of being retained by the voter the right is kept by the Electoral Department. I take it the proposition now is that when a person wishes to have his name placed on a roll—whether it is an absolutely new claim, or whether it is merely a transfer from another constituency—he has to give his full name and address, an address that can be recognised and identified, and has to give specimens of his signature on two cards, one of which goes to the local office and the other to the central office at head quarters, and that in both offices these cards are filed in alphabetical order. Consequently, if the elector changes his constituency and puts in a new claim, when the duplicate card representing the new name is received at the central office, it is immediately found that the name is on the roll for another district, and the requisite

transfer is made at once without any difficulty. If members will consider this proposal impartially and without bias of any sort, they must admit it will go a long way to check these duplications which have been so undesirable in the past. The presence on the rolls of a number of names not entitled to be there has been most disastrous to many candidates. It is in all our interests at parliamentary elections that the roll shall be as pure as possible. One can quite imagine under the existing Act that in a closely contested election, especially if the roll has been unduly inflated, a number of people may vote who are not entitled to vote, a number which may be quite sufficient to upset the result of the election. Yet it would be utterly impossible to tell for which candidate they voted. But if their voting could have been followed right through, possibly it would have in no way affected the result. I think that is one of the best features of the Bill, the provision for enrolment of electors; and I do not think a reasonable man can take any exception to it whatever.

Mr. Stuart: Do you want to know how they voted?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly not. Have I said anything to suggest that I wanted to know how a man voted?

Mr. Underwood: You are anxious about the aggregate at times.

The MINISTER: We are all anxious about that. Take the case of the Geraldton election, at which twenty or thirty persons voted who were not entitled to vote. [*Mr. Underwood:* Ninety-eight.] Possibly. With a proper system of compiling the rolls those people would never have been on the Geraldton roll, and thus a heavy expense would have been saved to Mr. Carson, the late member, while the present member would not have been put to such trouble to secure his just rights.

Mr. Heitmann: That was not the fault of the existing Act. The error was rectified under that Act.

The MINISTER: I think it was to a large extent the fault of the existing Act; because that Act lends itself to unduly inflated rolls. To inflate the rolls was

much easier under the Act than it will be under this Bill. I know that some exception has been taken on the other (Opposition) side to the length of time for which a person must reside in a constituency before he is qualified to get on the roll. The period is six weeks. When we compare that with the corresponding provision in the Acts of other States—and legislation in those States is fairly recent—our provision is by no means unreasonable. We are entitled to make sure that a person is duly qualified. At the same time, we should not take such excessive precautions as would tend to disfranchise anybody. I would point out that according to the Bill, although it takes six weeks to get on the roll, the elector is entitled to vote for his or her old constituency for three months after leaving it. So that if people should become disfranchised in any way, it is entirely their own fault; and I submit it only needs to be sufficiently advertised to be known throughout the State that it takes six weeks to make a transfer from one constituency to another, and that during the whole of that period the voter has rights in his or her old electorate.

Mr. T. L. Brown: Does not the Bill specify that a person must reside three months in the new electorate before applying for a transfer?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill specifies that the person shall reside for a month in a constituency before sending in a claim, and must then wait a fortnight before being enrolled. Personally I do not care whether it takes a week or two months for a name to get on the roll. Once a person is on the roll in this State, there should be no difficulty under the new measure in keeping there; and personally I am sure the Attorney General will consider any reasonable proposition which comes from the other side, if it has a tendency to make the measure more workable. Neither party in this House would desire to make this a party measure, or to secure from it any party advantage.

Mr. Underwood: You are only wasting time. The Bill is no good.

The MINISTER: I venture to think that the Bill is good, and that is how I

regard it. All I want is a clean Act that will enable us to have fair elections.

Mr. Underwood: Were you not elected fairly under the existing Act?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will not drag into this discussion matters in connection with which I may think that I have suffered some personal hardship from the other side. To do so would not conduce to a calm discussion such as we ought to have on this particular measure. The personal element should be kept absolutely out of the discussion. I have my ideas as to what happened at various elections in which I have taken part, and I have no doubt the hon. member opposite has his own ideas as to the way in which he was treated at elections in which he has taken part; but we shall not bring this matter to a satisfactory issue by airing our grievances in this House. On the whole, I will venture to say that after the 1904 election, when I with others carefully scrutinised the scrutineers' rolls of the various Fremantle electorates, it seemed to me there had been no improper behaviour by any party. What happened was rather due to the fact that the individual voted who was not entitled to vote, and voted without being urged to do so by any particular party. If in sufficient numbers those disqualified persons came up to vote, they could cause considerable inconvenience to the candidate and possibly upset the result of the election. I make absolutely no charges of impropriety against any political party that took part in any of those elections. With reference to the revision courts, we discovered on investigation by the select committee on the compilation of the rolls that the courts were an absolute farce. There cannot be the slightest doubt about that. One reason appeared to be that the names which it was sought to remove from the rolls, or the names which it was sought to add to the rolls, were placed before the revision court in tremendously large numbers. [*Mr. Collier:* By whom?] I tell the hon. member that I do not propose to go into such questions. I could say a good deal about members of both political parties in the district I represent,

and some of the things I might say would not be altogether pleasant hearing for the hon member. I am leaving those matters carefully alone, and I hope that when he speaks he will follow my lead. [*Mr. Collier:* No.] Dealing with the revision courts, the present proposal, which I think an exceptionally good one, is that at any time cases as they arise shall be brought before the local magistrate. They will go before him in small numbers; and it is much easier in case of objections or anything of that sort to scrutinise a small number and to scrutinise it properly than to deal with cases brought before the court in hundreds, as they have been in the past. I cordially agree with the system of preferential voting, and with the possible adaptation of a variation of the Hare-Spence system. Some time ago in South Australia I had the advantage of hearing Miss Spence lecture on her particular system.

Mr. Angwin: Do you know any place where the system has proved successful?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are few places where it has been tried, I think only in Tasmania, and there only in the cities of Hobart and Launceston, so that it is almost too early yet to say whether its success has been demonstrated. At all events, theoretically there is not the slightest doubt that the system is very near perfect. I admit that it may in practice not turn out so beneficial as the theory might lead us to expect; but there is this to be said, that if it proves efficacious in other parts—in Tasmania for instance—there is no reason why we should not adopt the system in this State later on, if we have electorates represented by more than one member. While on that question I may mention that I have heard the member for Kanowna (*Mr. Walker*) express the opinion in this House that the system of electorates returning several representatives—two, three, four or five—was in favour of the party with money. But we have in this State distinct evidence to the contrary; for in the Commonwealth Senate elections we had six members elected by the State as a whole; and I have no doubt the hon. member will not think I am making any reflection on the party

to which he belongs when I say that the party which always declares it has insufficient money with which to fight elections has succeeded in electing nearly the whole six representatives. Hence if we take a practical application of this principle as a guide, we find so far as this State is concerned that the particular principle works out favourably to the Labour Party; and the mere fact that the Attorney General has foreshadowed a possible decrease in the number of one-member constituencies is an indication that he has viewed this question with an absolutely open mind.

Mr. Angwin: Can you tell us how the system would operate when there are more than two candidates, and two members are to be returned?

The MINISTER: I do not know to which system the hon. member refers, the Hare-Spence system or the preferential system proposed in the Bill.

Mr. Angwin: The proposal in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As I understand it, the principle is that suppose there are three candidates, none of whom secures an absolute majority of the votes cast; then the preference votes cast for the lowest candidate are taken and added to the totals of the first and second, the lowest candidate being struck out. When that it is done, it is found ultimately that the candidate generally favoured by the electors comes out at the head of the poll. I have tested the principle myself, and find the system works out satisfactorily. I do not claim that theoretically it is as perfect as the other system; but it is difficult to get a system which will be at once simple and easily understandable, and yet fairly accurate in results. The mere fact that the system if introduced will do away with what I regard as the pernicious system of selection of candidates by political organisations before an election is in itself a recommendation, and for that reason I support the proposal. I beg to support the second reading of the Bill, and in doing so would express the hope that members in considering it will put forth every endeavour to make this a workable measure, and not bring party spirit too prominently into the discussion.

Mr. GORDON: I move that the debate be adjourned.

Objections from Opposition members.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	24
Noes	..	..	..	15

Majority for 9

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Barnett	Mr. Angwin
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Bath
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Davies	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Draper	Mr. Collier
Mr. Eddy	Mr. Holman
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Hornb
Mr. Gordon	Mr. Hudson
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Scaldan
Mr. Hayward	Mr. Stuart
Mr. Hicks	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Underwood
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Walker
Mr. Male	Mr. Warr
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Heitmann (Teller).
Mr. Monner	
Mr. N. J. Moore	
Mr. S. F. Moore	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Stowe	
Mr. Varyard	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Layman (Teller).	

Motion thus passed, debate adjourned.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading moved.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. Gregory) in moving the second reading said: It will be remembered that last year, when a debate took place here as to whether the railways should be placed under the control of a Minister, or a Commissioner, or three Commissioners, I gave the House an undertaking that before any action was taken by the Government in regard to the reappointment of the then Commissioner or the appointment of another Commissioner, this question would be brought before Parliament, so that members might be given another opportunity of discussing the question of Ministerial *versus* Commissioner control of the railways. Our railways are much too large an asset of the State to be treated lightly, when we take into consideration the large amount of money, some ten millions, sunk in our railways out of a total loan indebtedness of seventeen and a half millions. When we recognise that our railway system is

our best asset, it is necessary I take it that we should be careful indeed in the passing of legislation which might in any sense injure its value to the State. I may mention that while this Bill contains many new provisions, a few of them important, I intend dealing with only one of the provisions at any length to-night, that is for giving power to the Governor-in-Council to fix the salary of the Commissioner of Railways. That is the clause on which I feel the greatest amount of argument will arise; and in dealing with this clause I desire to refer to the work done in the past, in order to show members what the railways have meant to us during the past decade. The railways, after paying working expenses and interest, have paid into the Treasury £616,725; but the net profit during the past ten years has been a sum much greater than that, being £982,442. From 1902 to 1907 the railways paid into the Treasury, after paying working expenses and interest, no less than £292,331. I am of course aware that there are among members those who believe it would be wiser to have political control of our railways. To a certain extent we have always political control; but there are those who believe that the interests of the State would be better served by appointing a general manager, and placing the whole railway system under the direct care and control of a Minister, in opposition to what is known as the commissioner system. In the early days of railways in Western Australia they were under the control of a commissioner. In 1878 a commissioner was appointed, who subsequently became the political head of the railways. A general manager was then appointed, and that system prevailed until 1902; and from the latter date we have had commissioner control. In considering this question of Ministerial *versus* commissioner control, I would put it to members whether it is fair to ask a Minister to undertake the whole administrative control of the railways, seeing that you cannot give the same statutory power to a general manager that can be given to a commissioner. By adopting Ministerial control we are compelled to throw the whole of the respon-

sibility for the administration of the Department on the Minister; and I ask is the Minister for the time being ever selected because of special knowledge in regard to railway administration? During Mr. George's term of office as commissioner, five years, we have had as Minister successively Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Rason, Mr. Holman, Mr. Johnson, now myself; I take it that in no one instance was the Minister selected on account of any peculiar knowledge he had of railway administration. Each of them, I take it, was at liberty to create his own policy, or to follow the policy of his predecessor. It is easy for a Minister to fix his own line of policy in connection with the administration of the railways, and he is not bound to follow the policy of his predecessor. But when it comes to a question of railway administration, and when, as I have pointed out, we may have as many as five Ministers in five years, then to place the entire responsibility for the working of the railways on the Minister is placing on his shoulders a responsibility you have no right to put upon him; and if the Minister be given administrative power, I am quite satisfied that chaos will follow. That is if we had a strong Minister. If we had a Minister who felt inclined to adopt any recommendation which came before him and was controlled in a sense by the General Manager, he would follow the policy which was carried out previously; but if we had three or four strong Ministers following one another I am sure the Ministerial policy would be a very bad one, more especially if the Minister had had no training for work of that sort. I think members will agree with me when I say if we place the control of the railways under a Minister we are bound to have more political influence in connection with the working of the department than if the railways were controlled by a commissioner. There is no doubt—I do not want to reflect on members here, but what I am going to say has occurred in other countries—it has always been found there are certain persons who are desirous of getting recommendations from members of Parliament. Members are harassed, they in

turn often harass a Minister, and the Minister harasses the general manager, and the result will be a large amount of political influence in connection with the working of the railways. The Eastern States, with the exception of Tasmania, all have the commissioner system. It was in 1883 when they first adopted the system of commissioner control in Victoria. Mr. Gillies introduced the Bill dealing with the proposal, and member after member who followed welcomed the proposition, saying it would relieve the railways from the pressure of political influence.

Mr. Horan: It is a disastrous country you are quoting.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There was a good deal of trouble some three or four years afterwards, which I think was due more to political influence over the commissioner than anything else. The fact remains, although there have been many efforts to alter the system they still have commissioner control in Victoria. In dealing with New South Wales it was in 1886 when they altered their Act. I have a few notes from speeches made in connection with the discussion of the Bill in the New South Wales Legislature; and it was recognised there that political influence entered unduly into the management of railways. One member who at present occupies a high position in the Federal Parliament said:—

“So long as our railways are under political influence, so long as hon. members can bring influence to bear upon the Minister, and can hamper the heads of departments, our lines will not be managed to commercial advantage.”

Mr. Angwin: Who is that?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Sir William Lyne.

Mr. Underwood: You do not always take his advice.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I thought members opposite would pay some attention to what he said. Here is what another member said:—

“I have always maintained, and I got myself into hot water with the em-

ployees once on this question, that the railway service is altogether overloaded with employees, and that the only way to cure the difficulty is to remove from political influence those who have to get rid of those unnecessary employees and manage the railways on commercial principles.”

Here is another quotation:—

“It only goes to show—if it is true and I have no doubt it is true—the necessity for taking this large concern out of his hands at as early a date as possible, and then the Government supporters, and others who frequent his offices, will not be able to induce him to cram the Railway Department with employees and make it a political refuge for the destitute, for that is really what it is now.”

I emphasise these remarks to show what the feeling of members was in the Legislature in 1886, when they altered the administration of the New South Wales railways. I do not think there has been any time in Western Australia when any public man could make a similar statement to those which were made in the New South Wales Parliament, and matters are not such as was stated to be the case in Victoria when they altered their control, because at no time, I think, has political influence been very rife here. If we alter the policy and go back to Ministerial control, is it not reasonable to assume that there will be the probability of the danger of a similar state of things coming into existence here as that which existed many years ago in New South Wales, and in Victoria. In South Australia in 1887 they vested their railways in three commissioners; they reduced the number in 1895 to one commissioner, and that is the state of things that exists in South Australia to-day. In Queensland in 1888 they appointed three commissioners, but subsequently they reduced the number to two, and now the railways are controlled by one commissioner. Tasmania is the only Australian State where the railways are controlled by a general manager. I think members will see from the administration of the railways in all the Eastern States that it

was thought best for the railways to be controlled by a commissioner. There may be some criticism of our administration. I want to say it is impossible by comparison with the other States to make any fair comparison as to railway administration. Some people believe in making comparisons according to the cost per train mile or according to the percentage of cost to revenue; but conditions differ in the various States. There are the mileage and the population to consider; they may have a great mileage and a scanty population. Then there is the nature of the trade. In Western Australia we rarely ever get back-loading. Then there are the wages which require a lot of consideration, and the hours of employment; also fuel and water supplies. Fuel here is a very expensive item, and water also is a big item; in New South Wales and Victoria they have no such difficulties to contend with. In connection with the method of making comparisons there have been a good many comparisons made recently between Queensland and Western Australia. Mr. Thallon in his report this year makes this statement:—

“The revenue and expenditure per train mile, of which so much is made by Railway Departments generally, are of little use for comparison between States, where each has its own particular gauge and different local conditions; but they are of great advantage in comparing the results of one year with another, and indicate clearly what has been done towards economical working.”

From the report of Mr. Thallon, the Queensland railway commissioner, who is an expert and is thought highly of, it will be seen he does not consider it a fair thing to make comparisons of State against State, but rather to make comparisons from year to year in connection with their own various administrations. In making the comparisons that were made with Queensland I would like to point out although they had a particularly good year in 1896, they have had some very bad years, and the losses in connection with the Queensland railways for 10 years amount to £3,162,305. I saw in

a newspaper the other day, I do not know whether it is correct or not, a statement to the effect that this year is the first in which the Queensland railways have shown a profit after paying working expenses and interest on the capital outlay. It is the first year they have made a profit for the past 22 years. I have, however, the full returns for the past 10 years up to 1905-6, and each year shows a loss aggregating over £3,000,000. There may be good reasons for that; the railways may have been used there more than ours for the development of the country. I am of those who believe that our railway system should not be looked on as a mere profit earning department, but that after paying working expenses and interest on capital, they should be used as far as they possibly can for the purpose of developing the primary industries of the State. Then during the last few years the working costs in Queensland have been very low; there has been an increase of revenue between 1904-5 and 1906-7 of over £400,000. It can be easily understood where they have a continually increasing revenue that the working expenses are not likely to go up in the same ratio. There the working expenses have only increased by £39,000; therefore last year they were able to show an exceedingly high profit in connection with their railway system. I pointed out some time ago the rate of wages and hours of employment in Queensland. Their rate of wages is less and their hours of employment are longer than ours.

Mr. Bath: They have the eight-hours system now.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I was going to point out that recently they have decided to have the eight-hours system, and it is estimated that it will cost about £25,000.

Mr. Bath: It will cost £40,000. They are applying it to the casual hands also.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Railway Department gave the figure as £25,000. I do not think we are justified in making comparisons as between States. There is no doubt the Queensland railways have been magnificently

managed; they must have tried very hard to develop the resources of the State with economical management, for there is such a large deficit in the administration and their working. In connection with the railways the first question we ought to ask ourselves is, "Is our service an efficient one?" I think it will be admitted, although we heard last night that the railway trains ought to be run in such a manner to keep up the same system that we had before, and give a service which the Railway Department do not think justifiable, that in comparison with the population we give a better service than is given in any of the Eastern States; we run more train miles according to our population, and we give, I think, an efficient service to the public. The Kalgoorlie express which is run will vie with almost any other express within the States; and generally I think we can say that our service is an efficient one. The lines are highly improved and are in splendid order, and no doubt our railways are a better asset to the State to-day than they have been at any other period. As to the question of whether control by the Commissioner has been an advantage during the past five years, I think I have endeavoured to show that during the period our railways have been well conducted. It is difficult to point out where they have been better conducted than they were prior to 1902, because there have been varying conditions; but I can prove by figures—of course I am dealing with the figures to the end of June last—that so far as economical working is concerned the railways to-day are much more economically managed than they were in the year 1901-2. For instance in 1906-7 we carried five million more passengers and 177,000 tons greater tonnage, with £120,000 less expenditure; that is to say, we decreased our working costs by £120,000 in the five years, but we are now carrying five million more passengers and 177,000 tons more. It would be hardly fair to say from these figures the working was ever so much better; but I think we can say that our administration has been better. We must remember that a large sum of money was spent

on improvements to the grading of our lines, and we have heavier engines that enable one train to carry a much greater load, while the duplication of lines has enabled us to push on with not so many stoppages and to do away with considerable employment at the sidings. I know that I was always told, when asked for money for duplications, that it meant a great saving in working costs. There are also improved workshops which mean a large increase in working costs. All these things, improvement to grades, heavier engines, duplications, and improved workshops, tend to reduce working costs. But when it is costing us £120,000 less, though we are carrying five million more passengers and 177,000 tons of goods more, I think we can say that our railways have been doing better than they did some years ago. And there have been some large expenditure items charged against our railway system that were not charged in the old days. For instance, there is the item for the replacement of obsolete rolling-stock. Each year we place a sum on the Estimates for this purpose, and during the last five years we have expended for this purpose £209,000. Certainly some of it is not yet spent, but it is in a suspense account for the purpose, and it is charged against the railway revenue. Then there was the special expenditure in ballasting. We could hardly charge this item up to anything else but working expenses; and we have spent £141,000 in this direction. There is also an expenditure of £50,000 for improving the carrying capacity of waggons. An enormous quantity of waggons was altered by the Chief Mechanical Engineer to give them a far greater carrying capacity. In addition to this we had an expenditure of £36,000 for betterments. All these charges have come out of the revenue of the working railways during the past five years. So I think I can conscientiously say that, from a financial standpoint, our railways have been very profitable. And not only have all these charges been sustained out of revenue, but the railways have been able to pay £292,000 to revenue after paying interest and working expenses. A little while ago I mentioned that the

railways should be used in the future more for the purpose of developing the primary industries of the State than they have been previously. What I desired to convey by that was that the Government should control the policy of the railways; and that is where the Minister is necessary. To my mind the whole of the working of the railway system should be left entirely in the hands of the Commissioner, but the full responsibility should lie on the Government. When the Government desire that freights should be altered or that any alteration should be made in connection with what we may term the policy of the railways, the Government should on all occasions be compelled to take the full responsibility. When we altered the timber freights I saw in many of the newspapers strictures upon the Commissioner; and when we altered the grain freights the Commissioner was again criticised; but in both those instances the Commissioner was antagonistic to the reductions; and it was simply because the Government insisted upon their being effected that they were made. Under the present Act the Commissioner recommends charges, and once they are approved there is no power to alter them unless the Commissioner agrees to the alteration; but in this Bill we give the Governor-in-Council power to supersede the charges made by the Commissioner. Instead of the Commissioner having to do something he does not approve of, the Governor-in-Council will have power to make an alteration in the rates and the Government must accept the responsibility for the action taken.

Mr. Scaddan: The Bill goes farther than that and gives power to deal with regulations.

The MINISTER: If the hon. member looks at the section referred to he will see that it merely deals with charges. I was careful about that and consulted the Crown Law Officers upon it, because when I first read the draft I inferred the same thing as the hon. member; but I had the assurance of Mr. Sayer that it dealt with charges. I have often expressed my opinion as to the policy we should pursue in our railways. I think

we should always hold that the railways should not be a financial burden on the State, and then we should see that after payment of working expenses and interest on capital, the development of the industries of the State should be the primary consideration of the department. We want a policy which shall declare that the railways shall be self-supporting, that they shall have to pay working expenses and interest on capital, and that after that is done the chief object of the department should be to do the utmost for the purpose of trying to develop our primary industries. That is the policy I desire to see carried out, and I think it would be unwise to alter the system we have had in force for the past five years, which I think should be the policy for the future. My desire is to economise as much as we can in connection with our railway system. Of course there are complaints in connection with this economy and there always must be; but so far as we reasonably could we have endeavoured to treat those whom we have had to send away as generously as we could. There have been large numbers retrenched from the clerical branches and also from the lower grades, men who probably could not stand it as well as others; but if we do not insist that there shall be no persons employed in the department unless there is profitable employment to be found for them, and if we retain workmen though there have been so many improvements in connection with the system that we should be able to reduce our expenditure, if we do not take advantage of that expenditure and make the necessary reductions, then our railways are always bound to be a tax on us rather than an assistance in the development of the country. I want to see our railways used to the greatest possible extent in the development of the country, and I think it would be a mistake for us to go back to the system of political control, though I must say that during the years I have been in charge of the department I have not been worried by members in connection with the employment or dismissal of employees. However, it is always possible that there may be a recurrence of the

system that prevailed in Victoria and New South Wales in the old days. I think that by having Commissioner control by which we take from the department all possibility of political interference, except in such matters as relate entirely to policy, we will have the best system.

On motion by *Mr. Bolton*, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1907-8.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day, *Mr. Daglish* in the Chair.

Lands and Surveys, a general Discussion.

The PREMIER AND MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. N. J. Moore) in submitting the Estimates for the Lands Department said : It is usual in introducing the Estimates of a department to give hon. members some idea of the working of the department during the preceding twelve months, as well as some information in regard to land settlement and the proposed work for the ensuing year. I do not intend to detain members at great length in introducing my Estimates for Lands and Surveys. I may say, in passing, this is the third time I have had the honour to submit the Estimates of the Lands Department to this Committee, and I am glad to be able to report that so far as the work of the department is concerned, looking at it from a financial point of view we have every reason to be satisfied with what is being done. With regard to estimated revenue and expenditure, the estimated revenue for 1905-6 was £195,000, and the actual revenue received was £203,000. It was estimated that last year the revenue raised from the Lands Department would be £225,000, while, as a matter of fact, the actual revenue received was £237,000, or an increase of nearly £35,000 on the year 1905-6. The estimated expenditure for 1905-6 was £131,000, and the actual expenditure was £119,000. The estimated expenditure for last year was £117,000, and the total expenditure was £108,900, or some £8,000 less than was expected. However, even with a reduced

expenditure it has been found possible to cope with selection, which has been well maintained, although the selections for last year were not quite up to what they were the preceding year. For the present financial year the estimated revenue is £248,000, and the estimated expenditure £112,000. I am sanguine that this estimate will be realised, as for the three months that have passed in this financial year the revenue has totalled £80,707, an increase of £9,100 as compared with the corresponding period of last year. I do not wish to go over old ground, but will give members a few facts as to the Department. The Lands Department comprises 205 officers, and has accounts with 35,000 various clients. During the financial year 1906-7, 138,695 letters went in and out, or an increase in correspondence of 8,000 on the previous year. Members will realise that the Lands Department does not treat selectors in the ordinary way of a land agent, inasmuch as the payments for land which costs the selectors 10s. per acre are spread over a term of 20 years. This works out on the basis of a cash transaction at about 8s. per acre. In addition every block taken up entails a considerable amount of work, not only in surveying but also in other ways, such as the making of diagrams and plans, which have to be prepared, various lots have to be inspected by conditional purchase inspectors, and large expenditure is incurred in connection with advancing passages to selectors, and in some cases in paying the freight on new selectors' goods and chattels when they take up land. At the same time the policy that has been pursued hitherto of surveying after selection has resulted at times in the land desired by selectors not being granted in accordance with the application. When a man goes out with a guide to select land, it may be found, after survey, that owing to the clashing with a previous application, he cannot receive the land he applied for. We have endeavoured to do away with this difficulty by pursuing the policy of survey before selection, with the result that now it is possible for a man to receive a lithograph in the office of the department, go out to some of the

areas surveyed, select his own block, satisfy himself as to its exact position, go round all the boundaries, and then come back and put in his application. Provided he is the first applicant for that block he receives it, and if there are other applications in besides his own, then they are all dealt with simultaneously by a board, who decide which man shall receive the block. In addition to that, we have made provisions whereby an ordinary individual going over the country can satisfy himself whether the persons who have taken up blocks are complying with the conditions. Some 12 months ago I gave instructions that in future all lithographs produced by the department should show, in addition to the number of the area, the name in some cases of the person holding the land, the date of the approval of the application, so that anyone going through the country would be in a position to know the date of the application and how much should have been spent on improvements between the date of approval and the time of inspection; thus to some extent a number of amateur inspectors are created. With regard to the fulfilment of conditions not being seen by the inspector, it is possible for those persons who travel through the country to bring the real state of affairs under the notice of the department. Some cases, however, are brought under departmental notice by persons who apparently have not the moral courage to attach their names to their communications, for they are sent anonymously. In cases where it is found that there has been deliberate neglect and a practical abandonment of the property, the blocks are forfeited. In regard to the amount of land alienated during last year there were 3,572 applications for conditional purchases, totalling 763,827 acres, as against 4,291 applications for 911,948 acres during the preceding year.

Mr. Bath: Do those conditional purchases include grazing leases which are now described as non-cultivable land?

The PREMIER: No, for these non-cultivable lands have only come into operation since 30th June of this year, and they have not been included in the

totals. During the past year 26,367,463 acres representing 692 applications were received for pastoral leases and approved, as against 19,255,374 acres representing 506 applications in the previous year. For the three months of this year we have had no less than 1,037 applications for 5,206,000 acres of pastoral lands; included in this number of applications are some for the non-cultivable areas to which I have just referred, and which were previously known as grazing leases. The total number of applications approved last year was 4,445, showing a small decrease on the previous year; due no doubt to the fact that the area of selection of good land within the reach of railways was limited. Now that the construction of new lines has been completed in some cases and as other lines are in course of construction, large additional areas will be thrown open, and I look forward to a large increase in land selection during the next nine months. As was foreshadowed in the amending Land Act of last year the non-cultivable leases have been revived and are bringing about a great change in regard to settlement. Under this system the right of purchase is given in 20 years as against 30 years under the old grazing laws. Owing to the fact that all the pastoral areas under the 1887 regulations expire on the 31st December next, the present bar to selection of grazing leases and homestead farms within such leases in the South-Western Division—occasioned by the decision in the case of *Steere v. the Crown*, 1902—will be removed, and 330 leases of 1,820,141 acres, three-fourths of which land is second and third class, will be available under this popular form of tenure in the South-Western Division alone. Selectors will shortly be able to reap the advantages of the Government policy of building spur lines to agricultural centres, as the Goomalling-Dowerin, Katanning-Kojonup, Wagin-Dumbleyung, and Collie-Narrogin railways are now complete; the Donnybrook-Preston and Armadale-Jandakot lines are under way departmentally, and a contract has been let for the Greenhills-Quairading line. The Narrogin-Wickepin

Railway Bill is now before the House and other agricultural lines are contemplated, and the complaint that good land is too far removed from railway communication will not hold good for some time to come. There are some disadvantages in regard to the policy of survey before selection for pending the classification and survey, of the land large reservations have to be made. This has its objections owing to the fact that many people go on the land and do not appreciate the fact that it is essential that that land should be reserved until the whole of the subdivision is completed, and consequently there are complaints against the department owing to so much land being shut up. A large area, however, is now being thrown open. Since August 1st 40,000 acres at Dumbleyung, 15,000 acres at Woolkabin, both east of Wagin, 20,000 acres at Cunjinn, east of Brookton, 30,000 acres east of Pingelly, and 25,000 acres west of Cranbrook, on the Gordon River, have been thrown open for selection under Parts V. and VIII., conditional purchases and homestead farms, of the Land Act, the applicant for a homestead farm having, however, to take up the balance of the particular block under conditional purchase. In the case of a man applying for a block of 600 acres he would be entitled to take up 160 acres of that as a homestead farm, and 440 acres under conditional purchase. Under the old provision it was necessary to survey about 160 acres distinct from the conditional purchase. By giving this man the opportunity of taking up the balance of the conditional purchase land it saves us a considerable amount in survey fees, and as most members are aware, in the districts where this land is being subdivided 160 acres is practically useless to any man. It is necessary that he should have at least 600 acres. We give him that quantity and the right of 160 acres free as a homestead farm. Power has been given by the amending Land Act of last year to set aside certain areas for a particular class of selector. I have had this earmarked for the benefit of the man who does not possess land. One of my proposals was to, as far as possible, give the man who did not possess land

an opportunity of acquiring some. For this purpose we throw open under Parts V. and VIII., areas in different parts of the State. The qualifications for a selector to obtain any block within the area is that he does not possess more than 100 acres of land in Western Australia. The principal areas thrown open are—90,000 acres at Kwollyin, south of Kellerberrin, 24,000 acres at Jannerberrin, south of Cunderdin, 60,000 acres at Dowerin, north-east of Goomalling, 25,000 at Dinninup, on the Blackwood. There has been a certain area thrown up there quite recently; this is situated a few miles beyond the terminus of the present Donnybrook-Upper Blackwood railway. And 3,500 acres at Batalling near Darkan. Of the latter areas, Jannerberrin and Dinninup have been partially ringbarked, which must be of great advantage to those taking up the land. It is my intention to continue the policy in various areas throughout the State. One advantage is that by ringbarking before selection, the selector has the advantage at least of one season, and the cost of the improvements, that is the ringbarking or the clearing, as the case may be, is spread over ten years. Ringbarking has been done over certain areas at Balbarrup, south of Bridgetown; and the Surveyor General has placed before me certain other suitable areas on which to continue this class of work. We have scrubbed some of the land in some of the areas south of Cunderdin, and in addition we have ringbarked some areas from 50 to 100 acres in various blocks so that a man who takes up a block can get to work straight away, and this secures a return for his labour at an earlier date than he otherwise would. The extensions of the goldfields water supply to various districts on the Eastern Railway has given a great fillip to agricultural operations and settlement generally in that district.

Mr. Bath: Only those up against the line?

The PREMIER: Those within certain distances of the line, they guarantee a certain amount. The goldfields water supply asks 10 per cent. on the outlay, and in cases where the persons who are

served by the pipe line are not in a position to guarantee the whole of the 10 per cent. the Lands Department comes to their rescue and guarantees the difference between the amount guaranteed by the settlers and the 10 per cent. asked for by the Water Supply Department.

Mr. Bath : They could not get it up at Willundra, though they offered to give the necessary guarantee.

The PREMIER : That has not been brought under my notice; the only instances brought under my notice have been those at Greenhills and Tammin. In addition to this trial bores have been put down by the Works Department with varying success in many districts east of the Great Southern Railway. From the 1st July, 1906, to the 1st July, 1907, £2,424 was approved for water supply in the shape of wells, tanks, and trial holes, and of this amount £1,566 has been spent east of the Great Southern Railway. During the year 1,055,000 acres have been surveyed, and 236,550 acres have been surveyed before selection; also 2,650,000 acres have been classified and the information has been plotted on the plans, which will prove of great assistance to selectors. In many cases we have surveyed the main line of communication through the areas, so that in cases where the land is not surveyed before selection, a man is able to follow the survey line and make his application so accurately that the department is able to plot out the application on the plans. I have stated we have done a considerable amount of work; 20,000 acres have been ringbarked at a cost of £4,800; this has been spent on ringbarking, scrubbing, clearing roads, etcetera. In regard to surveys before selection four to six surveyors have been employed on a large subdivision not far from Dinninup, in the vicinity of the probable route of the proposed Preston railway. Two surveyors are cutting up extensive areas east of Narrogin and one is engaged on a subdivision at Baandeen. An extensive area is being classified north of Kellerberrin towards Cowcowing. The decentralisation of the department is a matter which has been under the consideration of various Ministers, but in alterations of this kind it

is necessary to go slowly so that no mistakes can be made, and in order that no very great expense should be incurred in the earliest stages of the proposal. I have made a start in this direction by appointing one commissioner for the Great Southern district. He is to have the powers of an under secretary in regard to the approval of applications, that is to say, in cases where a man goes out and selects land say east of Katanning or Wagin, he comes in with his application, and instead of forwarding the application to the headquarters office the deputy commissioner is empowered, provided there is no other application for the same land, to give approval straight away to the application, thus saving endless delays which are irritating to the selector and are bound to increase the work of the department, as it has to go through so many hands. I am satisfied this departure will be to the advantage of the department and ensure the speedy approval of applications.

Mr. Collier : Is that system to be in operation all over the State?

The PREMIER : In the agricultural areas. During the year the experimental farm at Nangeenan, which has been under the control of the Lands Department since it was first initiated by Mr. Hopkins, the then Minister for Lands, has been transferred to the Agricultural Department, but the settlement still remains under the Lands Department. Fourteen contracts have been completed and the holders have taken up the land under conditional purchase conditions, leaving 25 contracts to be completed. The Honorary Minister in charge of the Agricultural Department visited the districts recently and was gratified with what had been done by the settlers and the prospects for the ensuing season. No doubt the Water Scheme being in close proximity to the settlement is a great factor in its development. I am glad to notice these settlers are prepared, owing to the fact that they are able to secure a bountiful supply of water, to go in for dairying. Twenty-five of the settlers of Nangeenan have applied to the Agricultural Department for dairying cattle in lots of one to 15. The oldest settler

there, Mr. Growden, who took up land when the settlement was first thrown open, proposes to milk 100 cows next season and has applied for 20 immediately. There are applications in for 100 cows in various lots. This is gratifying, for we have always considered that with a nine-inch rainfall it is absolutely impossible to go in for dairying, but there is every promise, provided the settlers go in for ensilage, to make it a success. If they can make it a success we have hundreds of thousands of acres which have been considered up to the present time only available for carrying sheep, which can be devoted to this purpose, and which can be made responsible for carrying many thousands of dairy cattle.

Mr. Collier: Are all the blocks which were originally taken up occupied.

The PREMIER: Yes; in some cases where the original settler has left, his successor has taken over the liabilities and responsibilities of the original settler. There is one increase in the department, £1,500 being provided on the Estimates for the establishment of an agency in Melbourne, and at the present time the officer in charge there is Mr. Gilbert.

Mr. Collier: The best man you have in the service.

The PREMIER: There is no doubt about Mr Gilbert being a very valuable officer, and I am sure in the position he now occupies as officer in charge of the agency in Melbourne, he will do good work. He has a full knowledge of the State, and is a courteous and capable officer, and the money will, I am sure, be well spent.

Mr. Angwin: He is never too tired to give information.

The PREMIER: He will give us good value for his salary. Mr. Ranford, an old and experienced officer, has just commenced a lecturing tour in the Eastern States, and from the reports which I have received I have reason to believe our venture in this direction will meet with success.

Mr. Bath: What item will this be under?

The PREMIER: If the member looks under item 20 he will see the officer in

charge, and then there are items 20, 21, and 22, and on the next page item 45.

Mr. Bath: Which is Mr. Ranford's item?

The PREMIER: He is not debited to the Melbourne Agency, which only provides Mr Gilbert's salary and an assistant. Mr. Ranford at the present time will be drawing his salary from the Information Bureau, item 18. It will be noticed that his salary has been brought down £10, his original salary being £600.

Mr. Bath: It was never £600, it was £590 and travelling allowances.

The PREMIER: Yes; made £590 to be less than the Under Secretary. I am satisfied Mr. Ranford's efforts will be rewarded with success; because no doubt the misfortunes of many settlers in the Eastern States will have the benefit of drawing the attention of many people to Western Australia. The officer in charge of the Melbourne Agency has written to me that already eight or ten settlers have left for the West, and no doubt a good number will venture to Western Australia as the result of information supplied by the agency and Mr. Ranford. At the present time we have had inquiries by a large party as to whether it is possible for them to take up 10,000 acres; I am under the impression they are desirous of consolidating their improvements. There is a considerable amount of difficulty in arranging that, but if we can possibly arrange it we hope to be in a position to give these people an opportunity of selecting land where they are anxious to acquire it in the neighbourhood of Balbarrup.

Mr. Bath: Do they wish to work on the co-operative principle?

The PREMIER: Yes.

At 6.15, the Chairman left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

The PREMIER (continuing): I have little more to say on the Lands Estimates. I hope I have not wearied members, for on a matter of this kind it is necessary to quote largely from statistics. I should like to say in conclusion that we are making provision during this session for an amendment of

the Lands Purchase Act, to enable loans to be granted by the Agricultural Bank on terms similar to those on which they are granted to conditional purchase selectors. This will relieve certain selectors who have bought blocks in the repurchased estates such as Stirling Estate, and I feel sure they will be considerably benefited by being placed on the same basis as ordinary selectors.

[General discussion followed.]

Mr. BATH: It was gratifying to know that land settlement was proceeding apace, though not perhaps so rapidly as last year. Still, the area taken up showed that the resources of the State were commending themselves to settlers from outside as well as from within our own borders. One feature of these estimates was not so satisfactory from the point of view of the public, though it might be satisfactory to the Treasurer—the utilisation of the land-sale revenue for current expenditure. The estimated revenue from sales of land for the forthcoming year was £142,500; and the people of the State were thus practically drawing on their capital, disposing of it in order to supply their current needs. All knew the results of such a course in private life. We often read of cases in the old country where the scions of noble houses disposed of their patrimony and were left penniless. But apparently what was bad for the individual was regarded as perfectly legitimate and desirable for the State, though the moral distinction was not clear. Last year the Government passed an amendment of the Land Act, making it possible for goldfields residential lessees to secure the freehold. The Government had gone farther by trying to make the retention of the leasehold impossible, even for those who desired it. This was done by reverting to a tenure of twenty-one years in lieu of the longer tenure granted under the residential lease. The system forced people willy-nilly to buy freehold blocks, thus for the time being supplying the present Government with a little more revenue than could otherwise be secured, but paying no regard to the future, when all the land would be disposed of and no more

revenue would be available. [Mr. Ewing: Then we could tax the land.] Members who advocated selling the land showed little inclination to impose such a tax. On the Address-in-Reply the Premier had referred to economies in the Lands Department. There were certainly some reductions in expenditure, but there was little advantage in such reductions unless they were permanent. It was proposed for the forthcoming year to spend nearly £4,000 more than last year. The Estimates showed a number of increases, a portion of which was certainly accounted for by the Melbourne Agency.

The Treasurer: And by the provision for survey before selection.

Mr BATH: We had always been told the adoption of that system would effect a saving in administration.

The Premier: It would effect a saving after the land was thrown open; but the introduction of the system involved additional expense.

Mr. BATH: We had always to wait a long time for these good things to mature, and members must possess their souls in patience. When speaking on the Budget generally, he referred to the sale of Crown land along the Eastern Railway on what might be termed the margin of reliable rainfall. The Government were actually booming this land and selling it at 10s. per acre; but when the purchasers applied for assistance to the Agricultural Bank, the manager said he would not lend any money on land east of Doodlakine, for beyond that place the investment would be too risky. Either the manager was wrong, or the Government were wrong in booming the land. Many of the purchasers were men of small means. He knew of one settler who sold a fine home in the metropolitan area, abandoned his employment here, invested the whole of his money in that land, and had a very sad experience. The Premier referred to the supply of water from Mundaring Weir to settlers adjacent to the Eastern Railway. Some settlers a few miles away had also been supplied, those on the area around Tammin; but recently when at Kellerberrin he (Mr Bath) was informed that a number of settlers at Woolundra, between Kellerberrin and

Doodlakine, finding it impossible to get water by sinking or otherwise, had failed to secure a supply from the scheme. The proper Minister should make inquiries and give the desired assistance if the case were genuine. It was gratifying that the services of Mr. Ranford were once more being properly utilised. On the Lands Estimates this gentleman's case was referred to. While in one branch under the Minister for Lands Mr. Ranford was sent into the country because of his deep interest in land settlement, he thus lost his chance of promotion, and though he did good work and gave full satisfaction, yet when he came back after six months' leave he was placed in a 6 by 8 room in Cathedral Avenue in charge of a sheaf of wheat and a few turnips, to act as the head of an information bureau. Mr. Ranford was much dissatisfied at this, and recognised that he was not giving good value for the salary he received. But in his present position he was properly placed, being fairly steeped with enthusiasm for land settlement; and if anyone could induce Eastern farmers to come to Western Australia it was Mr. Ranford in a capacity of immigration lecturer. In spending money for trying to get settlers from the Eastern States, men accustomed to conditions somewhat similar to those in Western Australia—though it was to be hoped they would find them more favourable here—we were doing a great deal better and acting more wisely than in spending loan moneys for trying to induce immigrants to come from the old country, because it was only necessary to recognise some of the types introduced under the so-called immigration policy to see that there had been waste of money. One could not take up an Eastern States weekly paper devoted to agricultural matters without seeing that in New South Wales and Victoria for a dozen blocks of land there were thousands of applicants, sons of farmers endeavouring to strike out for themselves, who had been for years following up land ballots from one district to another searching for land but absolutely unable to secure it. Ridicule had been cast on the statement made a few days ago that land monopoly was rampant in Australia; but the weary pur-

suit of those thousands of men in Eastern Australia compelled one to recognise the fact. Could we get those men from the Eastern States we would find them more suited to the conditions here than any we might get from the other side of the Equator. On previous Lands Estimates he (Mr. Bath) had referred to how unwise it was to send settlers out beyond the margin of reliable rainfall. We should follow the system pursued in South Australia of delimiting an area of reliable rainfall and then cutting up the land beyond that area into grazing leases, a form of small pastoral leases, making them available for settlers under reasonable terms of tenure. This system would be better than inducing people to take up the land at 10s. an acre for agricultural purposes, and we would utilise the land to much greater advantage than we did now by making it available in pastoral leases in large areas but under conditions where a person wishing to take up a conditional purchase could go on and select. It was to be hoped some scheme would be devised very shortly by which the revenue derived from the sale of land could be placed to capital account rather than be utilised for the purpose of current revenue and current expenditure.

Mr. J. EWING: So far as the Lands Department was concerned a good many economies could be effected, not by reducing the salaries of the officers, which were already far too low, but by giving the heads of the departments higher salaries for greater responsibility and thus inducing them to undertake more work and carry on with a smaller staff. To carry on dairying successfully it was necessary to have a reliable and constant rainfall, and it was to be hoped the Honorary Minister was satisfied that those who were attempting to carry on dairying in the dry districts would be successful. The Government should do all they could to help those people and as far as possible to experiment before spending money in dairying in these districts. If dairying could be successfully carried on at Nangeenan undoubtedly it could be successfully carried on in the

South-West. It was pleasing to hear of the success of the Nangeenan settlement, because at the time it was established by Mr. Hopkins, it was thought it would turn out a failure. [Mr. Johnson: It was once said the Hamel settlement was a success.] Great care should be exercised in the dry districts before a large amount of money was spent in dairying. No doubt land settlement would come about in the near future. If the Leader of the Opposition went to the Lands Department he would find ten or a dozen large areas already surveyed ready for selection. Settlers had been disappointed because those large areas had been closed up pending survey; but now that difficulty had been overcome and the areas were surveyed there should be no trouble in the future.

Mr. A. C. GULL (Swan) : At one time it was considered impossible to grow wheat in Western Australia, and just the same at one time it was considered that the only place for dairying in this State was the South-West. The same argument would apply to dairying as applied to wheat growing. Experience showed that the South-West was too wet for wheat growing and also in a minor degree for dairying; and he had come to the conclusion that, just as in the wheat growing, better results could be obtained in dairying from an area not necessarily as dry as Nangeenan, but considerably dryer than most of the South-West. It was just as much a mistake to fall into the idea that dairying required intensely wet country as it was to think that wheat growing required an intensely wet area. [Mr. Bath: Good grass was needed.] The growth of the dry districts was so intense when it came along that the farmer could make provision for feeding his stock out of the natural grasses by means of silage and so forth. In the South-West the farmer was hanging on for month after month of cold weather when the grass would not grow at all. In Victoria the dry areas were producing as much butter as the other districts. The same thing would apply here. The country east of Northam would produce suffi-

cient butter for the requirements of Western Australia.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE (Katanning) : Although the area of the land selected was not so great last year as in previous years, the area selected under conditional purchase conditions was equal to if not in excess of the area selected in any previous year. Previously large areas were taken up under Clause 68, which was most favourable to the opening up of lands thought to be quite unsuited for agricultural purposes; but the development of these lands had shown that they could be turned to better account than was at first expected by those administering the affairs of the Lands Department and people of experience in the country, so the conditions were withdrawn and modified proposals included in the Act passed last year. Land taken up under the new conditions carried with it necessary improvements which would mean a great deal more development in the way of agriculture than had been the rule in the past, and judging from his knowledge of the go put into land development by the selectors the increased area would be considerable. It was gratifying to see such progress being made. It proved his own words of previous years as to the great capability of our country, and as to its only requiring men of the right stamp to take it up, backed up with sufficient capital, a good constitution and good judgment, to make a great success of land settlement. There was just now among the people settled on the land a buoyancy which was very gratifying. Last year there had been many expressions of disapproval in regard to the yields and prices realised for the crops, but this year there seemed to be improvement in both directions. A great deal had been heard about the prospective increased yields and there were already evidences of the increased prices. Unfortunately, however, the higher price the State was likely to realise for her products was brought about mainly by the misfortune of the people in the Eastern States. Although it was said that the prices being paid to-day were the result of a shortage in the world's markets, yet

he would point out that the probable cause of inflation in values was the dry weather in the Eastern States and the consequential poor crops and anticipated low yields. Those who watched the price of wheat, which was one of our principal commodities and one which we were looking forward to as the product of the land which would mean so much to the country, knew that the price to-day of 5s. 5d. a bushel in Melbourne was in excess of London values by nearly 10d. per bushel. This proved that it was not because of the shortage in the world's values entirely that the high rates were now ruling. If the present weather continued in New South Wales and Victoria there would be a great shortage in the yields. South Australia had been more fortunate, for their yield would be about equal to last year's, but if the two larger States did not obtain the yields anticipated a few weeks ago there would be a great shortage throughout Australia. Contracts were being entered into for shipments abroad from Australia. The reports as to the prices in the old country referred to the shipments for October and November. There were also the shipments for January and February and they would include the new crop not yet reaped, and if much wheat had been sold as for shipment during those two months it would make wheat very much dearer in Australia than the present indications pointed to, although the indications pointed to a very high price ruling for grain. Although some of the crops in the Eastern States might be past recovery, a timely shower of rain would alter the condition of things, even at this late stage. There was always a tendency on the part of those dealing in the commodity to plunge, and to deal with it in a speculative way. With a prospect of a higher rate for wheat prevailing it was hard to say now what the farmer should do with his crop. It was for him to say the price which, in his opinion, would give him a good return. They must not forget that any change in the weather might effect a great change in the price. He hoped that the present indicated prices would continue, or even go higher, as it would mean that more money would go to those pro-

ducing wheat in this State. It must not be forgotten, however, that although high prices were obtained, yet other industries would be seriously affected. For instance the dairying industry would be largely affected by a high price for wheat, as the cost of offal would be considerably greater than at present. He knew that dairy-men who had not contracted at the beginning of the year to get their supplies at £4 10s. a ton would now have to buy at nearly double that price. As the Minister for Agriculture had said, these prices would pertain only for the present season. He was in accord with those who had expressed the opinion that the dairying industry could be carried on successfully here. The methods of feeding had been improved to such an extent that the prospects for carrying on the industry with success were greater now than we ever thought in the past. Reverting back to the question of wheat growing, he would call the attention of the Premier to the remarks he made some time ago in regard to the prospective value of the increased production due to the increased price of wheat. He had not the figures before him but from memory he was of opinion that the Premier had said the prospective increase would mean about £300,000 extra to the State.

The Premier : That was when wheat was 3s. 6d., but it had gone up 1s. 6d. since then.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE : His estimate of the increased advantages to the State, owing to the wheat yield and the prices which would be obtained, was that the amount over and above last year would total more than one million pounds.

The Premier : But the member said the price of 5s. 5d. was abnormal.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE : The remark was qualified by the statement that it was contingent upon the crops in the Eastern States being the failure that was now anticipated. The price of grain at the present time was about 2s. a bushel in advance of what it was last year, and if the value of that alone were taken upon, say, 3,500,000 bushels of wheat, a considerable sum in advance of that received last year would result. Then there was also the enormous increase in the price

of chaff. If that commodity continued at the present price it would mean an advance of about 30s. per ton on last year's price, and if the State produced 160,000 tons of chaff, the increase would amount to about £240,000. All these indications went to show that the State was in for a good time. He regretted, however, that this good time should be brought about by the misfortune of the other Australian States. He would refer members to the remarks he made last year as to the improvements on lands prior to selection. He knew that certain improvements had been carried out, such as ringbarking on areas which had been cut up for selection after survey. Although that was a step in the right direction it was one which he had been loath to approve of until he had seen the advantages of the scheme. It would be better to carry out both ringbarking and grubbing of poison. The poison plant was a scourge to the country, and it had been most disastrous to those who had depastured stock in the neighbourhood of poison country. Listening as he did to the remarks of would-be settlers who had seen the country, he knew that the objection they always made was that they were afraid to put their stock on country lest it should be poisoned. These people were not aware that the poison could be cleared as easily as was the case. He would suggest that the Government should take out of the vote for the encouragement of agriculture, a certain amount for the clearing of some 100,000 acres of poison country to the west of Kojonup. If that were done it would be an immense gain to the country from a national standpoint, and would be the means of inducing settlers to take up land more readily and with more confidence than now. He would not let the work out by contract, but would obtain the services of a man who was experienced at the work, and give him the right to employ men on day work under his direction. The man to be avoided was he who expressed himself to be thoroughly conversant with the clearing of poison, for he was often more troublesome than a man who had no knowledge of the work. If an intelligent man were put under the

control of a good foreman he could get rid of a large quantity of poison in a short time. The work could be carried out at a cost not exceeding 2s. 6d. per acre. The cost would be less in some parts of the country and the average should not exceed 2s. or 2s. 3d. per acre. Such an expenditure would be money well spent, and if an area of country could be set aside and cleared in that way it would well repay the State. The land should be allowed to be taken up immediately after the poison had been cleared. [The Premier : There would be a big risk of new settlers "falling in."] They would be told that the poison had just been taken off the land and then there would be no risk. By adopting the course he had suggested the people's estate would be improved to such an extent that the expenditure would be well justified, for the land would be increased in value by as much as 200 per cent. in some cases owing to the poison having been taken off it. As to settlement generally, so far as the much-abused Lands Department was concerned, charged as it was with being over-manned and with not satisfying the inquiries of settlers, his experience, gained personally and also through knowing so many who had to deal with the department, was that a general expression of opinion prevailed which was most favourable to the department. They had a very difficult work to perform, the people who came being principally those who applied for land without much knowledge of the country. The information was required before they were satisfied even to look at the country, and when they had seen it they had to ask the assistance of the officials to enable them to take up the land. The officers did all they could in that direction, and no fault could be found with them; they did their duty cheerfully and well. There would be drones in every hive; there were drones in the Lands Department, as there were in every other department as well as in private life. [Mr. Johnson : Only in a greater proportion.] That depended on the administration and organisation of the department. It was a difficult department to administer; it had large interests and had to deal with a great

number of people. It was more difficult to administer this department than the Works Department or any other department of the State. [Mr. Troy: How did it compare with the Mines Department?] He had not much experience of the Mines Department, but taking the Lands Department as a whole there were officers there who did their duty well and cheerfully; no matter who went into the department the officers did their best to help intending settlers.

Mr. Johnson: There were others who should not be there.

The Premier: Why had not the hon. member removed them when he was in the Government?

Mr. Johnson: If the opportunity had occurred he would have removed them.

Hon. F. H. PIESSE: In conclusion he congratulated the Premier on the success of his efforts in the Lands Department. The Premier was certainly not able to give as much time to the department as no doubt he would like and which would be in the interests of the country, still, with that department on his shoulders, and the cares of the State on his shoulders, and the great demands made on his time in various other ways, it was difficult to give that close attention to the work which was so necessary. The department, through the officials was doing all that could be done to assist the settlement which had made such progress, and in his opinion the result was most encouraging. The time was coming when we should see farther advances made. Inquiries were now being made from the Eastern States for land in the Katanning district. This week three small properties had changed hands; people had come from the East and bought the places out, and people were turning their attention to this State. Last year a man living four miles from Katanning sold out his property and returned to Victoria, being induced to do so by his friends there. This man struck the dry district in Victoria and was ruined; he had written lately saying he wished he had not left this State. The misfortunes of the Eastern States were to be of benefit to Western Australia, because men were turning their attention in this direc-

tion. As to Mr. Ranford, one was pleased to hear the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to that officer. He did not hear the remarks of the Premier as to the Melbourne Agency, but it was carrying out that which last year it was thought would be a good thing for the State, following on the lines of New Zealand in giving all information to intending settlers. It was a step in the right direction. Although the action was looked on as unfriendly, if people were likely to leave Australia and go to other parts of the world, we should do all we could to induce them to come to Western Australia, for it was better to have them in the Commonwealth than to leave it. Judging by the success of Mr. Ranford in the past and his efforts in the direction of land settlement, and with the assistance of the officer in charge of the Bureau in Melbourne, he (Mr. Piesse) looked forward to much good resulting from Mr. Ranford's visits to the various parts of Victoria and New South Wales. When Mr. Ranford started land settlement in the Katanning district 10 years ago the officers in the Lands Department thought he was mad in placing people on the land in that neighbourhood, but it had since been proved that his efforts in this direction had been successful; people had built good homes for themselves, had got out of debt, and were doing well. This was the commencement of Mr. Ranford's efforts in land settlement, and since then 3,000,000 acres of land had been taken up in that district. The thanks of the State were due to Mr. Ranford; we required officers like Mr. Ranford to take up the work with enthusiasm. In 1891 Mr. Ranford was at Katanning, and he drove a party of settlers out to see certain land at Moojebing, which was very fine land. Mr. Ranford enthused about the land, and came down from his buggy and said to those in the trap, "Look at this fine country." The people evidently did not seem to admire it as much as Mr. Ranford did, and to infuse them with the idea he had, picking up a handful of the beautiful loam, he said, "It is so good you can eat it," filling his mouth with the soil. That is the kind of man we want. Perhaps in his exceeding en-

thusiasm and his desire for land settlement, he took that extreme course of showing to the settlers what he thought of the country, and perhaps did more by that eccentric method of drawing attention to it, than a good deal of talking would do.

Mr. BOLTON: It was certainly instructive to members to listen to the remarks of those who thoroughly understood every phase of land settlement; and it was gratifying to hear what great progress was being made by the Lands Department. He was satisfied that the Agricultural Bank was largely contributing to the progress that had been made, and he would go farther and say that he thought the gentleman in charge of the Lands Department was the right man in the right place, and was largely contributing to the success of that department. It was the general opinion of members that the Premier was doing his best; and one felt that the Minister was doing all he could in his department, when congratulations came from all sides of the House. He (Mr. Bolton) was pleased with the replies which the Honorary Minister had given that day to some questions which had been asked. The Government were taking a step in the right direction in making arrangements for the storing of wheat, and of making advances to farmers on their wheat.

Hon. F. H. Piesse: It will never come to pass.

Mr. BOLTON: Perhaps the member would do his best to stop it from coming to pass; but he (Mr. Bolton) was satisfied that it would come to pass, and measures would have to be taken so that it should come to pass within this year. He was satisfied that the Government were taking the right step in making provision for an export and storage depot, and for making advances to farmers on their produce.

Mr. Johnson: The depot was to be at Fremantle?

Mr. BOLTON: The export depot could not be at Guildford, it must be at the chief port of the State. The depot would have to be at Fremantle, and if the Government intended to go on with the work

it was just as well they should get a move on straight away. If we were to have the increase predicted by the Premier the Government would be behindhand again, therefore it was well to get a move on and to provide for the great export which was to take place next year.

Hon. F. H. Piesse: Where was the export to go to?

Mr. BOLTON: If the price could be maintained at anything like what it was to-day it would be a good thing for the farmers of this State; and so long as they could export wheat at a good price, it did not matter to Western Australia where the produce went. If it was right to compliment the Government on what they were doing in a satisfactory manner, it was also right to point out anything on which one thought they should be condemned. In the Lands Department one found a net increase of £3,379; and naturally after one had heard of the progress being made, and about to be made, one would expect the increase to be in administration, but one hardly expected it to be in increases of salaries. He would be glad to hear of everybody getting increases if we could afford it, but we were told we could not afford it. The lower officials were not getting the increases, and it was not the higher paid officials who were doing all the work. There was an increase of £1,045 in the salary column and a decrease of two officials. There had been an increase of clerks, and two other officers appointed, making a total of five. The increase for the new officials amounted to £111. If it was deducted from the £3,379 there was a net increase of £2,147, whereas only three new officials had been added.

The Premier: Where was the £2,000 increase in salaries?

Mr. BOLTON: If the Premier would reckon up the amounts he would find there was an increase of £1,045 in salaries, and an increase of £111 for new officials. Then there was an increase in the item for clerks of £724, there being three additional clerks in the land selection branch. Those in receipt of fairly decent salaries were getting an increase, and those in receipt of small salaries were not getting increases. He must enter his

protest against this course of action. This kind of thing took away some of the praise one naturally gave to the Lands Department.

The Premier: Look at item 43.

Mr. BOLTON: The same number of clerks were employed. Item 43 said, "Increases to juniors for the whole division." This showed that the increases to juniors were provided in another item, and not in that to which the Premier referred. Though salaries for this year were to be increased by £2,146, there were only three additional clerks. It was difficult to ascertain who were to receive the increases, but apparently they were being given to the more highly-paid officials.

Mr. UNDERWOOD did not share in the jubilation over the large area of land sold. Rather should we make some attempt to keep our great heritage of agricultural land for the people who would come after us. All the efforts of the Government and of Parliament seemed to be directed to getting rid of the fee simple. The member for Katanning (Hon. F. H. Piesse) said that the hard times in the Eastern States drove their agriculturists to Western Australia. Those people came simply because the Crown lands in Victoria and New South Wales had been sold as ours were being disposed of now. The land sales were a sad feature of our administration. Moreover, a man could take almost as much land as he chose, and hold it absolutely for speculative purposes. Near the railway station at Cunderdin thousands of acres of conditional purchase land had been held for many years, not a tap being done by way of improvement, though there were improvement conditions. One block in particular of some 1,500 acres had been held for seven years, and was still in a virgin state. It was a pity that a man could take up land at all unless as an occupier. Nevertheless, the Act provided that he must improve the land; consequently those holdings around Cunderdin should at once be forfeited. We were spending £1,600 a year on a Melbourne office to bring here men who on their arrival passed by this land held for speculative purposes, and had to go

twenty or thirty miles farther out. The land should be for the man who was prepared to use it. The member for Katanning said all we wanted was men of the right stamp to go on the land. The stamp that appeared to be getting a fairly good hold of our land was the stamp that sat in offices and acted as land agents. As to the department, the other day he (Mr. Underwood) applied at Perth for a small piece of land, and was told he must send the money to Northam. The postal remittance cost him sixpence. Two or three days later he received from the Northam agency an acknowledgment of the amount, "for transmission to the collector of land revenues, Perth, who will forward a receipt for the same if the amount is correctly due and is accepted by the department." Here was an opportunity for effecting a small economy. While on the subject of Northam, he had been asked to speak about the land gazetted as forfeited, and applied for, the applicant's money being returned with an intimation that the rent had been paid. He could give the Premier particulars of one instance. Land transactions throughout Australia were not too clean, and people were always suspicious of them; therefore the Lands Department should be absolutely above suspicion. The instance mentioned was the only one he had heard of. The sum of £5,500 was set down for land guides, and it appeared somewhat excessive. Another large item was that of land inspectors.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not now refer specifically to items.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The inspectors were too highly paid, and if they did not do their duty any better than they did in around Cunderdin, we could do without them. He had heard of one inspector who was practically blind, whereas inspectors ought to be exceptionally sharp sighted. As to the Melbourne office, one could not agree with the Treasurer. I was people already here that induced outsiders to come to the State. The money spent on that office was almost entirely wasted. It was said the office did good work by contradicting false statement made in the Eastern Press, particularly in Victoria. The effect of these state

ments during the past twelve or fourteen years had been that one-third of the population of this State came from Victoria; hence we could not have too much Press criticism. To spend £1,600 to try to counteract such criticism was a waste of money which could be better spent here. This State had the best agricultural land in the Commonwealth, and those who said Federation would strangle us did not know Western Australia. It would take two or three Federal Governments to strangle this State, which could easily hold its own even if the Federal Government were antagonistic; but with the assistance it was getting from the Federation, Western Australia would in the not far distant future be the leading State in the Commonwealth.

Mr. ANGWIN: Had the Premier taken action on the Public Service Commissioner's report? Had he made the increases or decreases of salary recommended by the Commissioner or the appeal board? The Commissioner reported that the Lands Department appeared to be the least effective, his opinion being based on information obtained by personal interviews with practically every officer of the department, by evidence taken on matters arising before the appeal board or at the hearing of charges laid against officers, and generally by investigating the service. The Commissioner drew attention also to the Lands and Colonial Secretary's Departments overlapping in immigration matters. Had anything been done to prevent this? What was done in the matter of office accommodation, to which the Commissioner drew attention? Much time was lost through want of organisation. Because of the number of small rooms the officers were not under proper control, and the superiors were not able to guide the work in a proper manner. Was anything likely to be done in carrying out the wishes of the Public Service Commissioner in the direction of providing proper accommodation, particularly for the draftsman? The Minister was to be congratulated on the number of officials in this department under the Public Service Act, because there were few casual employees in the department.

Other Ministers should follow the example set and bring all officers under the Public Service Commissioner so that we would have proper reports laid before Parliament when dealing with the public service. It is to be hoped the Premier would adopt the suggestions of the Commissioner for working the department more economically than in the past.

Mr. G. TAYLOR: As mixed farming was to be the order of the day, the farmers should be protected when bringing their stock to the railway termini by the Government making efforts and giving every facility to clear of all poison the roads along which the stock travelled. In many cases the roads were covered with poison which, being greener than the herbage, presented a menace to the farmer driving his stock for despatch to the market.

Mr. E. E. HEITMANN: There were several complaints one desired to bring before the Minister in order that the mistakes of the past might be avoided in the future. A person on the goldfields who had applied for some land near Geraldton had to wait seven or eight months before obtaining approval of his application. It appeared that the land had been previously surrendered, and the surrender was not in order, but greater expedition should be shown by the officers of the department in getting the approval of applications. Again land has been sold which was really of no value. Of course members representing farming constituencies would say it was foolish for persons to take up the land, but we were endeavouring to induce men from the goldfields and people from other countries not acquainted with our land to settle on the soil. One mining man took up land in the South-West which had been pointed out to him by a land guide. On returning to the goldfields with the idea of placing a man on the land to work it, this would-be settler had applied to the Agricultural Bank for a loan in progress payments, but the advance was refused because the land was valueless. Seeing that these men from the goldfields were so likely to accept the advice of the land

guide, it was cruel to treat them in this way. Many such cases had been brought under notice. It seemed from another complaint that the department were disinclined to adopt a policy of land settlement on the goldfields similar to that followed in agricultural areas. The land around Cue and Day Dawn had been occupied for many years by pastoral lessees, the Government receiving 10s. a thousand acres. A few years ago a dairy farmer who supplied Cue and Day Dawn with milk took up land and had now about 100 head of cattle; but this man was blocked from obtaining land on which to run the cattle he had got. Being unable to get land from the Crown, the dairyman was forced to rent land from those already leasing it from the Crown, but could not get a better tenure than a month to month lease, and these lessees could prevent him from grazing his cattle immediately he attempted to sell any beef. In a letter the Premier had informed him (Mr. Heitmann) that this man could only take up land under the Mining Act, but under that Act not more than 500 acres could be taken up. That was too small an area. Some provision should be made to allow these big leaseholds to be cut up into smaller blocks. It would be better for the country. This man was prepared to pay much more than the Government received from these leaseholders. He would even have been prepared to buy the land at third-class rates. Men who would go in for areas of 30,000 acres should be studied in preference to men holding blocks 100,000 acres in extent. There was another matter in connection with small holdings on the fields. Men had gone out from the mines and had taken up land. These men were still working in the mines but their object in taking up land was to endeavour in the future to get away from the mining altogether. They should be encouraged, but instead of that they were handicapped by the department. When taking up four or five acres of land for which the Government at present received 10s. per acre they were compelled to pay £4 or £5 for survey fees and inspection and then, if the land was within two miles of a townsite, they had to pay two shillings per acre per annum for 20

years, or if without two miles of a townsite, sixpence per acre per annum for 20 years must be paid. If they went on to the land and started gardens, piggeries, and poultry runs, they should be given the land so long as there was a residential qualification. People should be encouraged to go on such lands on the goldfields.

The PREMIER (in reply generally) thanked the Committee for the generous way in which members had received his estimates. He could assure members he was glad to have the suggestions which had been thrown out. With regard to the one made by the last speaker, it would, as suggested, be necessary to have an amendment of existing legislation; but he would be glad to consider with the hon. member his proposals with the view at some future date of seeing whether it would not be possible to carry them out and enable persons in the proximity of goldfields towns to acquire land sufficient to enable them to run a small herd. The member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) had referred to a matter which was receiving attention and that was the eradication of poison on main lines of communication. Two months ago he sent out a circular to roads boards asking them to give an estimate and a suggestion as to what roads in their districts should be cleared of poison and as to the cost. Apparently the boards took it to mean every road in their district, for the result was that such an estimate had been sent in as would astonish most people. He had directed the inspectors of the various districts to send in a plan showing the main lines that should be used as stock routes and setting forth approximately the area that would have to be cleared of poison, so as to make some provision for the eradication of the pest. Several settlers had experienced very serious losses owing to the poison not having been eradicated. The main trouble had existed lately owing to the fact that the land now was settled so closely that they could not adopt the previous methods of making detours in order to avoid the poison country. Travelling cattle had now to follow the surveyed tracks and conse-

quently severe losses had been suffered. The member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) had referred to the fact that large areas had been taken up and in many cases very little had been done in the way of improving them. He gave one instance where in the neighbourhood of Cunderdin 1,500 acres had been taken up and no improvements had been effected in seven years. If the member could back that statement up with facts he would see that the land was forfeited within the next month. He was endeavouring to make provision for these cases by inserting on the lithographs the date of approval of selection, so that anyone travelling through the country could forward to the Lands Department an intimation to the effect that certain land had been taken up for so long and that apparently no improvements had been made on it. It would then be the duty of the department to inspect the land and, if the statement was borne out by facts, the land should be forfeited; if it was not forfeited he would be glad for members to draw his attention to it. The member for East Fremantle had referred to the question of office accommodation in regard to the draftsmen. He believed that at the present time some provision was made whereby the chief draftsman was able to control his staff in a better manner than had hitherto been the case. As to the restricted areas the member for Katanning had referred to the fact that under the new Land Act areas were very much restricted and the conditions of improvements were very much more stringent than they were previously. Reference was also made to the fact that large areas had been closed up. He had explained that in his opening and had said it was necessary that these areas should be reserved pending survey. Although it had the effect possibly of affording some disappointment at the time, he felt sure that the result of their being able to give a prompt reply to applications for land would more than compensate for the temporary inconvenience created. With regard to the reference made by the Leader of the Opposition to the water supply question, the two places he referred to were

Tammin and Meckering, and the Minister for Works told him he had rung up his department and was informed that there had been no applications refused, provided that the guarantee was put up. If the member would give him particulars of the case he would make inquiries with the view of seeing whether it would not be possible to meet the wishes of the people, provided that they were prepared to put up the necessary guarantee.

[Votes and Items discussed.]

Subdivision 1—Land Salaries. £29,060.

Item—16 Clerks, Correspondence Branch, £2,306 :

Mr. TROY: There were a number of increases, the amount in excess of last year being £234. Who were the officers to whom these increases were given?

The PREMIER: There was practically only an increase of £26 as compared with the vote of last year, but it was an increase of £235 as compared with the sum expended. The reason for the difference was that the position of one of the officers provided for last year was not filled. The salary of the principal clerk was at £266 a year for six months and at £262 a year for six months, the alteration being made as a result of classification. Apparently that officer had been reduced by £8. The next officer mentioned was Mr. Spencer, who received a salary at the rate of £258 for six months and £256 for the second six months. Apparently he was suffering from a decrease of £4 per annum as the result of classification; he was the correspondence registrar and had charge of the record office.

Item—Packer, £100 :

Mr. ANGWIN: As a result of inquiry into the stores branches of the various departments conducted by an inquiry board some time ago, it was suggested that all these branches should be brought under one head and so lessen the cost of control. Apparently this was not being done, as provision was now being made for an assistant to the storekeeper in the Lands Department.

The PREMIER: There was a proposal on foot, as the result of the inquiry made by the board, to concentrate the stores

branches of the various departments; but it was found that the officer in charge of the stores branch at the Lands Department must have extra assistance pending the scheme suggested by the inquiry board being brought into effect.

Item—35 Clerks, Land Selection Branch, £5,892:

Mr. TROY: There were three additional clerks provided for under this heading and the increase to the total sum for salaries was £724. Were increases given to any particular officers?

The PREMIER: The principal increase was in the salary of Mr. Morris and this was the result of the classification. He received at the rate of £355 a year for six months and at the rate of £375 a year for six months. He was in charge of the land selection branch and of all the inspectors and was one of the finest officers in the department. Mr. Morris had a thorough knowledge of the work of the department, and the increase given him by the Public Service Commissioner was well merited. [*Mr. Bath*: The services of the chief inspector had been dispensed with.] That was so. Of the increase the sum of £200 was accounted for by the fact that the position for which the salary was provided was not filled last year. It was reinstated, however, this year and the appointment had been made rather than that the sum should be spent for temporary assistance. The same remarks applied to a salary of £180. This sum had been reinstated this year and a permanent officer had been appointed. Owing to the increased correspondence it was absolutely necessary that the item should be reinstated. Provision was also made for the appointment of another clerk at £150. That position had not yet been filled but was advertised for. These items practically made up the increase between the estimate for this year and the actual expenditure of last.

Mr. BATH: Was it intended at any future time to make a farther appointment in regard to the chief inspectorship of lands? And in the case of permanent appointments, did the Public Service Commissioner make a recommendation in each case?

The PREMIER: It was not proposed to appoint a chief inspector, as it was considered that the officer controlling the sub-department could do the work, and it was not desired to make farther permanent appointments unless absolutely necessary. It was thought that Mr. Morris could do the additional work, as the branch was relieved of some of the work along the Great Southern line.

Mr. BATH: Did the Public Service Commissioner make recommendations in the other cases?

The PREMIER: All the appointments were made through the Public Service Commissioner.

Item—12 Inspectors of Lands £2,610:

Mr. STUART: Was it true that one of the inspectors was blind?

The PREMIER: Was not aware of any inspector being blind.

Mr. BATH: The officer referred to held a position under the department and also under the Agricultural Department. A number of settlers had stated that the officer was not entirely blind, but his sight was so defective that he had to be led about by a boy in order to carry out his work, which was a handicap to the department.

Item—Travelling and transport allowances, £1,800:

Mr. HEITMANN asked for information.

The PREMIER: A sum of £150 per annum was allowed to each inspector, who provided, as a rule, two horses and a buggy and his maintenance.

Mr. BATH: The Railway Department were making special carriages so that the inspectors could carry their horses with them. Did the department intend to make a saving by this?

The PREMIER: The work of the conditional purchase inspectors was limited to certain districts and they were not required to use the railway at all. The inspectors under the agricultural bank had to travel a considerable distance, and he presumed the accommodation referred to was provided for them.

Mr. BATH: Did not some of the lands inspectors carry out agricultural bank work also?

The PREMIER : Occasionally. Two inspectors were recently transferred from the Lands Department to the Agricultural Bank.

Item—8 Clerks, Roads and Reserves Branch. £1,358 :

Mr. TROY : There was an increase in this item of £234; did this represent the appointment of an additional officer ?

The PREMIER : This was made up by the transfer of an officer who was separately shown on last year's Estimates.

Item—District Land Commissioner £500 :

Mr. ANGWIN : Was this appointment made by the Public Service Commissioner ?

The PREMIER : This officer was Mr. Farmer who, on last year's Estimates was put down as chief land agent. The appointment was made by the Public Service Commissioner on the recommendation of the Under Secretary for Lands. This officer had exceptional knowledge, having been a district land agent. He had a knowledge also of the various Land Acts. He would make his headquarters at Katanning as soon as the preliminary arrangements were completed.

Mr. ANGWIN : We were told that officers who were receiving a salary more than was recommended by the Public Service Commissioner had to be reduced each year for five years until the salary was brought down to the classification. The Public Service Commissioner in dealing with this officer recommended a maximum salary of £315. Mr. Farmer appealed against this classification, and the appeal board dismissed the appeal. He had now been appointed district land commissioner. Were the duties increased after the Public Service Commissioner dealt with the position? This was the second case in which a highly paid officer's salary had been increased instead of being decreased.

The PREMIER : This position was classified by the Public Service Commissioner, and the salary for the position was reduced from £500 to £315. There was no doubt the position was a misnomer. The duties the officer carried out were not worth the amount paid. This

officer had now been appointed district land commissioner with power to approve of applications. When applications were sent in he had to visit the various districts and give his approval. In cases where there were two or more applicants for land a board was appointed comprising the district commissioner, the local land agent, and some other person in the district, and this board decided on simultaneous applications, which rendered it unnecessary for witnesses to be brought to Perth to give evidence before the land selection board. The duties this officer had to fulfil were important, and more responsible than he carried out previously. He had had exceptional experience in the Lands Department, and was qualified to administer the Land Act. The Commissioner concurred in the appointment of this officer. Messrs. Farmer and Morris were responsible in the first instance for the recommendation as to decentralisation.

Mr. Johnson : Did the Public Service Commissioner endorse the appointment ?

The PREMIER : Yes.

Mr. Angwin : Did the Public Service Commissioner recommend the appointment of this officer at £500.

The PREMIER : Yes. The decentralisation scheme was not approved by the Commissioner at first, but he (the Premier) was desirous that it should have a trial, and it was eventually arranged that an appointment should be made. Instead of making two appointments it was decided to make one to see how the scheme worked, and Mr. Farmer was appointed to the position with the concurrence of the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. Scaddan : When was the appointment made ?

The PREMIER : In June last year.

Mr. Scaddan : How was the expenditure for last year accounted for ?

The PREMIER : This officer carried out certain duties last year as Chief Land Agent.

Mr. TROY : The position quite warranted the salary; but it was generally understood that the officer was not fitted for the position. People who knew him well said that he was somewhat lackadaisical, and not very energetic. He

(Mr. Troy) had heard from ex-Ministers for Lands that they did not think highly of the officer's qualifications. For this office the most capable man available, whether in the State or outside, should be found.

Mr. SCADDAN: The title was "District Land Commissioner," and for last year £482 was provided. Mr. Farmer did not hold the position last year. To whom was the salary paid, and why was the increase of £18?

The PREMIER had already explained that this new position was created by the decentralisation proposals. Last year the officer, Mr. Farmer, was called Chief Land Agent. The duties of District Land Commissioner were thought to be worth £500, though the Public Service Commissioner did not think the Chief Land Agent's work worth more than £315. Mr. Farmer was selected for the new position, and the position of Chief Land Agent, an entirely different office, was abolished.

Item (Information Bureau)—Officer-in-Charge £590:

Mr. ANGWIN: According to the Public Service Commissioner's report on this officer's appeal, he was labouring under a sense of injustice due to the action alleged to have been taken some years ago, which the board considered a fit subject for inquiry though outside its jurisdiction. Had anything been done?

The PREMIER: Several members had agreed with his action in appointing Mr. Ranford immigration lecturer in the Eastern States. The injustice of which Mr. Ranford complained was that seven years ago he was promised the position of Deputy Surveyor General. The then Premier, notwithstanding the Minister's recommendation, decided not to appoint such an officer, and though the recommendation had reached the Executive the appointment was never made, but Mr. Ranford then became Chief Land Agent. Had he been appointed to the other office he would have taken precedence over all the surveyors except the Surveyor General. Mr. Ranford was apparently satisfied with the present position, and

would doubtless do good work for the State.

Mr. BATH: The Premier was somewhat in error as to Mr. Ranford's grievance. So far as one could gather from the files, it appeared Mr. Ranford was in the direct line of succession to the Surveyor General, both by length of service and ability. But he was appointed Chief Land Agent, took six months' long leave, the first in some thirty years; while absent his billet was filled; and on his return he was put in charge of the paltry information bureau in Cathedral Avenue. He made complaints against other officers; an inquiry was held; and he did not receive justice but he had to pay costs. Mr. Hopkins, then Minister for Lands, was in fault; for he somehow conceived the idea that Mr. Ranford when on holiday wished to retire from the service, whereas the officer's health had broken down.

Mr. Angwin: That Minister had offered Mr. Ranford a pension to retire.

Mr. BATH: When Minister for Lands he (Mr. Bath) thought it farcical that Mr. Ranford should be in the Information Bureau, where he himself felt he could not do justice to the department. It was gratifying to know that Mr. Ranford was in his present position, and we must agree with the Public Service Commissioner that Mr. Ranford's case was one for inquiry.

Item (Information Bureau)—Clerk £260:

Mr. BATH: Did the Premier intend to retain this so-called establishment and pay this salary?

The PREMIER: The officer, Mr. Fry, who was also a licensed surveyor, answered a considerable number of inquiries. His services were often utilised in reporting and making valuations for the Lands Department. When special leases were applied for, he generally reported and advised as to the annual value that should be fixed. His professional knowledge was of great use in this position, where he was doing good work. Members might have seen his recently published *Guide to Settlers*, for which he

had been complimented by the Press and practical men.

Mr. BATH had no wish to attack the officer, and was glad of the information. The Bureau would not justify the paying of £260 for a clerk. The institution was of little use, and its paraphernalia would not impress intending settlers.

Item (Melbourne Agency)—Arrears accrued on appeal, £40:

Mr. T. L. BROWN: How could there be arrears in respect of the Melbourne Agency, only recently established?

The PREMIER: This should have appeared as a distinct item, as the amount was provided to pay off sums deducted from salaries during the last financial year, but now granted by the appeal board, which revised the Commissioner's classification.

Subdivision 2 — Surveys, Salaries £25,510:

Agreed to without remark.

Subdivision 3—Lands Contingencies, £12,300:

Item—Caves Board Grant, £1,000:

Mr. SCADDAN: There was an increase of £200 on this vote, to which he had always taken exception, because we could do better with the money in developing the resources of the State than in developing and beautifying caves which only a small section of the community could visit. There would not be so much objection to the grant if the caves were near Perth, where they could be visited by people from all parts of the State; but situated as they were, they could only be visited by the *elite*. In view of the finances it would be preferable to reduce the item instead of increasing it. He moved an amendment—

That the item be reduced by £200.

The PREMIER: Hon. members visiting the caves would know that it was absolutely necessary for sufficient money to be devoted to their upkeep. These caves were considered by many good judges to be far superior to the Jenolan Caves, on which the New South Wales Government spent many thousands of pounds, but the

Caves Board had last year been impressed with the necessity to economise, and the vote had been reduced from £1,500 to £800. However, the sum was found insufficient and the board had overrun the constable, so that it was necessary this year to increase the grant. This money was not restricted to the Busselton district; it was also spent on the caves at Wanneroo, which were within easy reach of Perth. The matter had been thoroughly inquired into, and it would be unwise after spending so much on the caves, to allow them to get into a state of disrepair. The money was spent very carefully by the honorary board responsible for the expenditure.

[Mr. Hudson took the Chair.]

Mr. TAYLOR: This item was generally freely discussed by members. Unfortunately, we had not the Caves Board's report before us this year.

The PREMIER: The report was typed; but the board was not allowed to print it.

Mr. TAYLOR: The caves and the roads leading to them had cost many thousands of pounds, and in past years there was always vigorous opposition to any expenditure in this direction. The Government should insist upon the board economising and endeavouring to make the caves a paying concern. In other parts of Australia such places were paying concerns. What was of more importance to the State than caves and sight-seeing places was the fact that we had to curtail our education vote and that there were many places where children were not receiving education. Seeing that the board had overrun the constable last year, there was no proof they would not do the same again this year, and get another increase on the next Estimates. When the matter was before the House previously the same arguments were advanced by the Government, that as such huge sums had been expended in the past we should spend more; in other words, because we had sinned in the past we should sin in the future. It was a wrong policy to follow. The item should be reduced and the caves should be put on a paying basis.

Mr. HOLMAN: These caves and the roads leading to them had cost the State £50,000, and there had been no return for the expenditure. The promise had been given years before that in a short time the caves would be revenue-producing, but they were not, and we continued to spend all this money in order to enable a few deadheads to visit them. So large an expenditure should be countenanced no longer. When it was remembered that many prospectors had to pay an enormous price for water and that many died through inability to obtain medical attendance, it would be realised that the time had come for grants now being made for pleasure resorts to be utilised for the necessities of the people in the back blocks. Many "dead-heads" went to the caves at the expense of the State, and that was described as being of benefit to the country. A work that was very badly needed was the construction of a road between Peak Hill and Nannine. It would cost £1,000, and the result would be to reduce the distance by 25 miles. [*The Minister for Works*: An officer of the department reported against it.] Other men who knew the country better than that officer had reported favourably on the road. If it were constructed the cost of cartage would be greatly reduced and the result would be the saving of thousands of pounds. However, instead of spending the money on such a work, which would be reproductive, the Government was voting it to a mere pleasure resort. It must be admitted that the caves were beautiful, but they should not be farther beautified at the expense of the unfortunate people in the back country. Very many prospectors at Southern Cross had been forced to close their mines down on account of the cost of water. Again, at Meekatharra the cost of water to prospectors for crushing alone amounted to 3s. per ton. [*The Minister for Mines*: That report was exaggerated.] Anyhow, the charge for water was 6s. per thousand gallons for crushing purposes. Rather than spend this money on the caves, it would be better to make a reduction in the price of water there, or open up roads in the agricultural district.

The necessities of life should be provided before luxuries.

The PREMIER: It was a pity that two of the members who had protested against the vote did not adopt a similar course at a time when they were members of a Ministry. He would point out that at that time the Government of which they were members provided £3,000 for the caves, or an increase of £2,000 on the preceding vote.

Mr. Holman: That was because a promise was made that no more money would be required for the caves.

The PREMIER: Perhaps the hon. member would accept a similar promise from him. Anyhow, the fact remained that whereas the Government to which the hon. members belonged increased the vote by £2,000 in one year, the present Government were only asking for an increase of £200. It was admitted that the caves were worthy of the admiration of visitors to the State, and it would be a great pity if, for the sake of £200, they failed to provide properly for maintenance and up-keep.

Mr. T. L. BROWN protested against the increase in the vote. In the initiatory stages it was necessary that the vote for the caves should be much larger than they were now, and this was the reason why the vote was so much larger at the time when the Labour Government were in power. The caves were now developed, and the board should try and keep expenditure within reasonable bounds. Mention had been made of the condition of affairs now pertaining on the fields. People settling on the land required facilities for getting their produce to market and the Government should consider these people rather than increase a vote for luxuries. If the Government could afford to reduce the amount for assistance which had been given in the past to settlers on the land then they should not increase a vote for pleasure.

Mr. STUART supported the amendment, not that he did not appreciate the beauty of the caves, but the Government had treated in such a scurvy manner the hospitals, the municipalities and the roads boards. We should not pander to

a class who could afford to visit these beauty spots, for there were far more deserving objects to which the money could be placed.

The TREASURER (member for Sussex) could understand the opposition of members to the item if the country were being starved in every direction; but the fact was that the Government were providing all the facilities of transit to which the member for Geraldton referred, and also providing all facilities for education to which the member for Mt. Margaret referred; the Government were also providing heathful resorts such as were to be found in the Caves district. There was no centre where a respectable number of children could be found that did not receive educational facilities, and there was no centre where the parents of children could not get a capitation grant if five or six children were found in the locality. To argue then that we must cease to beautify the spots given to us by nature and which were utilised by all sections of the community was nonsense. Members could not mention one person who visited the Caves at the expense of the Government.

Mr. Holman: Would the Treasurer place a return on the table showing the number of "deadheads" who visited the Caves?

The TREASURER: Certainly, if the return were moved for. Those persons who derived benefit from the Caves were persons who could ill-afford to spend money in travelling about for pleasure. The coupon system inaugurated by the Caves Board had worked admirably, and last year 2,249 persons took advantage of the coupon system. The Caves in this State were said to be, by those who knew, second to none in the Commonwealth. If members talked about reducing the vote, they might as well strike it out altogether and close up the Caves, and if they did that they should close up the various parks. Why should there be any place at all for recreation in the State? Close up the whole of the places, and leave people to take to the bush for recreation! When the Labour Government were in power in 1904-5, they placed a

sum of £3,000 on the Estimates, and the Caves were not in their initiatory stages then more than at the present time.

Mr. Holman: The money was to pay for the Accommodation-house which had previously been started.

The TREASURER: Portion of this item of £1,000 was for the renovation of the Accommodation-house. Visitors to the Caves furnished a considerable profit to the railways. The 2,249 persons who visited the Caves would represent a return of at least £3,000 to the railways, which would not be earned by the railways if we had not the Caves for people to visit. The sum was only £200 more than was provided last year, though there had been considerable expenditure in opening up the new caves at Yanchep, where grounds were being laid out and a caretaker was placed in charge. These Caves were a great attraction, and within easy distance of Perth and Fremantle. Why all this opposition to health resorts? The board's balance-sheet showed the excellent work of the Caves Board and its secretary, who earned an annually increasing profit to the State by the issue of coupons.

[*Mr. Daglish* resumed the Chair.]

Mr. BATH recognised, in the indirect profit secured by the railways, some justification for this expenditure. The Caves attracted visitors who might otherwise go East for a holiday. But members had no definite information as to the income derived from this large outlay. The New Zealand Tourists Department earned a considerable profit. Our expenditure on the South-West Caves was large, including the initiatory cost of roads, which served few people except visitors to the Caves. Much more thickly-settled districts could not get one-tenth of the amount for roads. The whole expenditure was wrong from the start. Before the Caves were popularised, and when visitors were few, the Government built an expensive accommodation-house, resulting in a heavy loss. But immediately the Caves were popularised by the coupon system and lavish advertisements, the house was leased to a private person.

The Treasurer: The Government had been losing on it £600 a year.

Mr. BATH: Yes; and as soon as a profit was possible private enterprise was encouraged to step in. Year after year we were informed that these votes were the last required. There should be a clear understanding whether the Caves were to be a permanent burden on the taxpayer, or whether they would in a reasonable time show a profit. What could justify the expenditure of new Caves when, owing to the falling revenue, necessary facilities in agricultural and mining districts could not be provided? At this rate we should soon have a cave for each Minister to hide in on the inevitable day of reckoning. Last year the Treasurer assured us the vote had been reduced, out of a desire to economise in view of the deficit. Was not the financial position worse this year?

Mr. ANGWIN: The amount provided on the Estimates for Caves and roads to them amounted to about £1 per head for every visitor to the Caves. Where was the addition to the railway revenue in that? There was a sum of £330 provided for repairs to the Accommodation-house. Who received the rent from the Accommodation-house? Did the board have that to expend in addition to the amount provided on the Estimates? If so, the amendment was justified. It would be better to have railway communication with the Caves, because then they would attract more visitors. As for the Yanchep Caves, it was proposed by the board to have gardens and parks laid out. There was one gentleman who sat on most of the boards in the State. It would be well not to have him on so many boards, for whenever he was on a board the grant for the board was increased.

Mr. Ewing: That gentleman did a lot for the State.

Mr. ANGWIN: Anybody could do a lot of work when there was plenty of money with which to do it.

The Treasurer: The Labour Government did not reduce the vote.

Mr. ANGWIN: Because the money had been expended before the Labour Government came into office. As for

these boards, they were a curse to the country. It would be well to abolish the Caves Board and take Mr. Robinson, who was a splendid officer, into one of the Government departments. Then the Caves would be run much cheaper and more to the advantage of the State.

Mr. EWING: The idea of opening the Caves originally was to provide a place of recreation for the people, particularly those on the goldfields; and a large proportion of the visitors to the Caves came from the goldfields, so that it was surprising that some members opposite opposed the vote. Those visiting the Caves during the year must have circulated £10,000 in doing so. This item would not greatly affect the giving of facilities to outlying centres, and there was already a fairly large programme on the Estimates for that purpose. With regard to this board, we must remember that it was all honorary work in connection with park boards, caves boards, and roads boards; and we should give every credit for the work these boards were doing, and not try to traduce the members of them. The gentleman referred to by the member for East Fremantle had done great service to the country.

Mr. SCADDAN: The goldfields people had not the same advantages for visiting the Caves as people in the coastal districts. The coupons were issued only between Perth and Busselton.

The Minister for Mines: There were special excursions from the goldfields to Busselton.

Mr. SCADDAN: See how that worked out. The average excursion fare per mile from Kalgoorlie to Busselton worked out at .618d. per mile second-class, and .89d. per mile first class. From Perth to Busselton, where the coupons were in force, the cost was .373d. per mile second-class, and .745d. for first-class. He would like to know whether the coupons were dearer than the ordinary excursion fares. It was useless for members to argue that the funds were provided for the special benefit of goldfields people. It was desirable that people on the goldfields should be induced to leave there every year, but the

railway department thought otherwise, for they charged the excursion fares 100 per cent. higher to Perth from the fields, than from one part of the coast to another.

The Minister for Railways : Special rates had been brought out this year for the journey from the fields to Busselton. Perhaps the hon. member had not yet seen them.

Mr. SCADDAN: The people on the fields had no great desire to go to Busselton. He had not seen those new rates. The Treasurer had made a statement that the Caves were run for the benefit of the whole community, but he must have a peculiar idea of what constituted the whole community, considering that last year 2,240 people visited the Caves, while the population of the State was 260,000. The additional amount of £200 would provide school facilities in different districts. He had mentioned a case where 13 children were growing up in ignorance for want of a school teacher, notwithstanding the fact that a hall was available for use as a school. The Education Department was approached on this matter some time ago, and they said that if certain conditions were complied with by the persons owning the hall, a teacher would be appointed. Those conditions were complied with, but the reply was received from the department that the matter was having farther consideration.

The Minister for Education : There was a school within four miles of that place.

Mr. SCADDAN: The Treasurer would take care that his children were not forced to walk four miles to and from school.

The Treasurer : They did not attend the national schools.

Mr. SCADDAN would continue to oppose any suggested increases of the character of the one under discussion so long as additional educational facilities were needed in the outback country.

Mr. J. BREBBER: Some time ago when the people on the goldfields kept their wives and families in the Eastern States and used to leave Western Australia every year for their holidays, it was suggested that everything possible should

be done to make the national beauty spots of the State so attractive that the people would see fit to spend their holidays in this country. We spent money to develop our places of amusement and entertainment, such as the Museum, the King's Park, the Zoological Gardens, so as to keep the people in the State. Carrying out that policy the Government had opened up the road to the Caves, and were only doing what the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand had done. America also did the same thing. We should make the country attractive to tourists, who would come here and spend their money in the State. In place of the continual sneers from the Opposition, the Government should have their support in making the country better than it was. Members should not run down the country in which they derived their livelihood. The Opposition used every endeavour to prevent anything that lent itself to the pleasures, amusements, and instruction of the people.

Mr. VERYARD: What proportion of this amount would go for the improvement of the Yanchep Caves? Up to the present time not a single ornamental tree had been planted in the neighbourhood of these caves. A fence had been erected and a stone building was there which was utterly useless. Some money had been spent on an embankment along the shores of the lake and a screen had been erected for bathers; but at the present time persons visiting the Yanchep Caves had to travel through eight or ten miles of heavy sand. Some money should be voted for the making of a road to the caves.

Mr. ANGWIN: The Caves Board was useless. All that body thought of doing was to obtain as much money from the Government to waste. In regard to the Yanchep Caves a magnificent plan had been drawn but nothing else had been done and the member for the district should see that some money was spent in improving the approach to these Caves.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	17
				—
Majority against	..			5

ATES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brebber
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Collier	Mr. Draper
Mr. Holman	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Stuart	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Underwood	Mr. Layman
Mr. Veryard	Mr. Mole
Mr. Ware	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).	Mr. Monger
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Price
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Gordon (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Item—Melbourne Agency £900 :

Mr T. L. BROWN asked for explanation.

The PREMIER: Some £400 was apportioned to rent. We were advertising in about 30 country newspapers, at a cost of a little over £200. The balance was for incidental expenses, including a caretaker at £1 a week.

Item—Grant to National Physical Laboratory (expended in previous year):

Mr. SCADDAN: Though no provision was made in last year's Estimates, £100 had been expended. Why?

The PREMIER: The information was not at the moment available.

The CHAIRMAN: As there was no sum set down, the item did not call for discussion. The hon. member might give notice of a question.

Subdivision 4 — Surveys £39,675—agreed to.

Total vote for Lands and Surveys, £106,554, put and passed.

Vote—Woods and Forests, £7,194:

The PREMIER: For last year the estimated revenue of this branch was £20,300 and the estimated expenditure £5,668. The actual receipts were £27,783 and the actual expenditure was £6,270; the revenue having thus been underestimated by £2,500, while the expenditure was £600 in excess of the estimate. The estimated revenue for this year was approximately £22,600 and the estimated expenditure £7,194. Information as to

the actual revenue received to date was not available, but there was every likelihood that the anticipation would be realised. The only new departure in connection with the branch was that during last year the results of the experimental planting of pines at the Hamel State Nursery had encouraged the Government to extend these operations, and quite recently a large area had been reserved in the neighbourhood of the Ludlow River, with the object of having 100 acres planted with the *pinus insignis*, which pine appeared to be suitable for that portion of the State. Tenders had been called for clearing, fencing, and ploughing this area, and a suitable reserve had been made round the 100 acres reserve. Members would gain some idea of the rapid growth of this pine when informed that quite recently one of the trees, after eight years' growth, had been sent to Bayley's mill at Armadale to see what it could produce in the way of fruit cases, and had turned out 42 fruit cases of various sizes. The tree was 54ft. 4in. long with a 16in. diameter three feet from the ground and a mean girth of 2ft. 7in. While we realised we had many timbers suitable for fruit cases, many of them were too heavy. It was necessary to reduce the weight of fruit cases as much as possible; eight pounds was the usual weight, but a blackbutt fruit case would run as high as 13 pounds. The fruit cases made from the pine tree would be on exhibit at the Show next week as evidence of what could be done by encouraging the growth of this pine. Many thousands of fruit cases were imported last year; and if by the growth of soft woods we could make all our own fruit cases, it would be an industry well worth encouraging. He had been waited on by various nurserymen last year with a request that the department should discontinue the free distribution of trees; but he had not thought it advisable to curtail the free distribution on the gold-fields where the natural timber had been depleted, and where we should do all we could to encourage the growth of trees. During the year several sawmill permits had been granted under the Amendment Act of 1904; and with the exception

of one case of which members knew something, the conditions had been observed and there was every indication that the new system of tenure was preferable to the old.

Mr. BATH: It was pleasing to hear the Premier had decided not to acquiesce in the desire to prevent the free distribution of trees, especially on the goldfields, because it was recognised that the denudation of the timber had a material effect for the worse on the climate; and it was pleasing to hear of the success of the pine plantations. They had been carried out at a minimum cost by the employment of prison labour, and good work had been done by the Forestry Department. In Victoria the sum of £600 per acre had been derived from pines planted years ago. There was one anomaly in this department. If we had an expert gentleman carrying out the work of this department, one well acquainted with technical details, the position would be worth a much larger salary than that paid to the present Acting Inspector General. The time would come when we would have to deal with the question, as every other nation had at the present time. In Japan a profit of £400,000 a year was derived from timber reserves, and in that country there was a system of planting camphor trees which it was expected would be worth twenty-five millions in 20 years' time. They were doing much in this direction in India and other countries. Some of the Rhodes scholars sent from Australia were studying forestry in the old country with the view of securing appointments in the Indian Forestry Department; it was a pity we in Australia could not secure the advantages of their services. The Government should go in for re-afforestation on a scientific basis, not only to preserve our local timbers but also for planting timbers such as pines, which would prove of assistance in the future. The increased expenditure in the department had been rendered necessary by the new regulations which required more forest rangers; but as we had gained increased revenue from the operation of the royalty system it was of advantage to the State.

Item—Acting Inspector General of Forests, £300:

Mr. ANGWIN: The Public Service Commissioner classified this officer, Mr. Richardson, at £230 maximum. Was the officer doing extra work for the £300? If the Government could not carry out the Public Service Act, the Act should be repealed.

The PREMIER: Although certain amendments might be introduced in the Public Service Act, he could not agree that the measure should be repealed. As to the officer in question, the salary put down originally for the Inspector General of Forests was £600; but Mr. Richardson, who was secretary of the department, had been acting as inspector general for some years. In the public service classification the office of clerk in charge of the woods and forests branch was set down at £230. If the position of Inspector General of Forests were filled, then Mr. Richardson would have his salary reduced to £230; in the meantime he would receive the £300 he had been getting for the past four or five years as acting inspector. The Public Service Commissioner in referring to the office said: "This classification of £230 is on the assumption that an Inspector General of Forests will be appointed." At the present time Mr. Richardson was receiving a salary of £300.

Item—13 Forest Rangers £2,330:

Mr. COLLIER: This vote showed an increase of £177. He desired to know whether, as a result of a statement made in a recent law case that several hundreds of pounds had been lost, owing to the lax manner in which a certain forest ranger had carried out his duties, the services of that officer had been dispensed with. It was evident that the system of collecting timber royalties was a bad one.

The PREMIER: There was no increase in the vote this year as compared with the vote last year, but the increase was £177 as compared with the expenditure of last year. The reason for this was that one officer had been away for some time. With regard to the second question of the hon. member as to the ranger referred to in the Whitaker case,

inquiries had been made, and it had been reported by the head of the branch that, although as strict an inspection as was desired had not been made, still the neglect was not sufficient to cause the officer's services to be dispensed with. It had been said that £600 had been lost by the department. That was not so. The Crown Law Department were now making a claim on the parties concerned with a view to recovering the amount owing.

Other items agreed to ; vote put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier : Papers on Applications for Loans in connection with the Stirling Estate.

BILL—POLICE FORCE (CONSOLIDATION).

Received from the Legislative Council, and on motion by the Premier read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.28 o'clock until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 24th October, 1907.

Questions: Agricultural Railway Lands Resumption	PAC
Cattle from Tick Area	3
Overpayment of Subsidies to Municipalities	3
Railway Wood-line, Cue	3
Sewage Filter-beds	3
Sewerage Scheme Inquiry	3
Agricultural Information and the Press	3
Motion: Sewage Filter-bed Drawings	3
Bills: Mt. Magnet-Black Range Railway, 2s. moved	3
Sale of Government Property, 2s. concluded, Com. reported	3
Estimates resumed: Treasury Votes and Items, first to Audit passed	3
Discussion on Tender Board System	3
Discussion on Care of Aborigines	3

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

Prayers.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL RAILWAY LANDS RESUMPTION.

Mr. STONE asked the Premier: Will he consider the advisability of resuming all unimproved land within ten miles of new railway lines in agricultural districts for the purposes of close settlement, the value of the said land prior to the construction of such railways?

The PREMIER replied: Provision made in all new Railway Bills that have been introduced for the resumption of areas of not less than 1,000 acres, and certain blocks are being inspected at the present time. The clause referred to reads as follows:—

"At any time after the passing of this Act, and until the expiration of twelve months from the publication of notice in the *Government Gazette* declaring the railway open for traffic, the Governor may, with the object of encouraging the cultivation and settlement of the land, compulsorily purchase any land in parcels of not less than one thousand acres, each parcel being the property of one person or two or more persons jointly or in common, and situated within fifteen miles on either side of the line of railway, and when the land is certified by the Minister of Lands as suitable for closer agricultural settlement: Provided that no land shall be compulsorily purchased until the Land Purchase Board has favoured and reported thereon."