

claim that the North can be developed with white labour and possibly I am the only Parliamentary representative of the northern areas who claims that this is possible. All my colleagues favour development with indentured coloured labour. I adhere to my contention that the northern parts of Australia can be developed by white labour, and that being so, we must endeavour to get people settled in those parts. The practice of taking people from the South to do a job in the North and to then take them back South, is no good. There is no doubt in my mind that intense culture is possible in the North, but it will require some irrigation in order to secure the best results. There are fine possibilities ahead for anyone who is prepared to embark upon these activities. A man can have his holding and work on it. For part of his time he may earn big money at shearing or at the Meat Works, and when the work there is finished, he can go back to his holding and continue to develop it. It is utterly useless to talk about close settlement or intense culture unless we find a market for the resultant produce and the means of taking that produce to the market. If the Government intend to go ahead with their proposition and settle the North, they will have to consider this aspect. As soon as they attempt to put men and women in the North and ask them to produce, they must find markets for their produce and ships to convey their produce to those markets. Unless that problem is solved the Government will only be wasting money by appointing secretaries and commissioners. Apart from closer settlement, even if we were to leave the North with but little improvement on its present conditions, we require, not to open up new provinces, but to develop those already opened up, to construct harbours, to provide water supplies, and to build short spur electric railways driven by energy generated by the tides. But if it is to be only a question of giving limelight lectures and appointing a Commissioner and a secretary to the Commissioner, and letting it go at that, well it means wasted effort and a wasting of the State's money. I feel pretty serious on this question. I know that we can settle the North, and that those who go to the North will do well. It is the best part of Australia I have ever been in. When the new classification of pastoral leases comes into force, we shall receive something like £100,000 per annum in land rents from pastoral leases. The leaseholders are improving the land; they are not taking out the minerals, nor in other ways impoverishing it. It would be only reasonable if half the money derived from pastoral leases were earmarked for developmental work on that country, just as a certain amount of money received from timber areas should be reserved for the development of those lands. I repeat that, unless the Government intend to go into this matter thoroughly, and are prepared to spend money judiciously, they had better leave well

alone. In conclusion, I would like to say a word in regard to Wyndham. The position there is that many of the pastoralists—I am not speaking now of the big pastoralists—have for years worked like horses and lived like dingoes in their endeavours to build stations. They have denied themselves all of what the normal young man regards as pleasure. Unless something is done those men, after years of toil, will have to carry their swags out of there. There are 30,000 bullocks in the vicinity of Wyndham which cannot be treated. They are left in the bush to die.

Mr. Teesdale: To die?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Of course.

Mr. Latham: When?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: In two or three years. The hon. member should know that if you do not get rid of your surplus stock, you become overstocked, and not only those you do not sell will die, but some others also. Here again the Government are drifting. They do not know, they cannot tell the people of Wyndham, what they are going to do. The Government should decide within a week or two whether they are going to run those works next year, or whether they are going to try to get a market and find ships for those 30,000 or 40,000 bullocks.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are endeavouring to do that now.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I should be pleased to know whether you intend to run the works, or run ships.

The Minister for Agriculture: I said nothing about the works.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: You cannot run the works and run ships, too. If you run the works, the bullocks will be treated at the works. You have to decide first, before you start to do anything else, whether you are going to run those works. Once you decide not to run the works, you can send your Commissioner to Java to see whether he can sell bullocks. But you send him there without knowing whether you will have any bullocks to sell. It is the duty of the Government to decide as soon as possible whether they are going to run the Wyndham Meat Works next year, and, if not, to endeavour to get markets, and ships to carry the surplus stock to those markets.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. K. Maley—Greenough) [8,21]: First let me throw around a few bouquets. I might be permitted to pay my personal respects to the member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan). I congratulate her, as a fellow Western Australian and a product of my own district, on the very high honour she enjoys in being the first representative of her sex in an Australian Parliament. I should like to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations on your re-election to the high office you occupy, and also on the fact that, unlike many of us, you had an uncontested election in your constituency. I wish to tender my thanks to the

Leader of the Opposition for the very kindly references he made to my promotion. The capable and interesting address of the hon. member, taken in conjunction with the very practical views of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) and the well reasoned and sound address of the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) are indicative of the general desire of the community that party faction shall not separate us altogether in confronting the many grave issues awaiting our consideration. I do not pretend that I have made myself *au fait* with the ramifications of the various wheat pools, or with many phases of administration in connection with the Department of Agriculture. I am endeavouring to acquaint myself with those things which concern my administration. The generous expression of opinion voiced by the member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier) encourages me in the belief that my experience in meeting for the first time the cares and responsibilities of office is not altogether dissimilar from his own. I hope that my endeavours in the administering of the Department of Agriculture will be fruitful of results. I am not going to say anything to-night in regard to that department because, when the annual Estimates come down, I shall be able to deal fully with some of the various phases of its administration. I have already taken the earliest opportunity to give the shareholders in the wheat pool some information in regard to their affairs. I attended the last meeting of the Australian Wheat Board, and on my return to this State I gave the shareholders of the pool some idea of their equity in the 1920-21 pool. When my statement appeared in the Press, the chairman of the Australian Wheat Board, Senator Russell, said the figures were not official, and denied any responsibility in connection with them. At the meeting of the board which I attended, it was agreed that any statements made by individual members would be made on their own responsibility. It was on that understanding I made that statement. In my opinion the whole community is concerned in the operations of the wheat pool. Knowing that considerable responsibility rests on the community in connection with the initial payments to the farmers on delivery at sidings, and that through the Agricultural Bank, the Associated Banks and the Industries Assistance Board, considerable relief has been afforded the farmers from time to time, while the funds necessary for the development of the agricultural industry have been readily furnished, I frankly admit that the producers cannot claim that they, and they alone, are concerned in the pool. I wish to refer to the vexed question of the price of wheat for local consumption, and to make this declaration that I personally have never been in favour of fixing the price of wheat for local consumption for a 12 monthly period.

Hon. P. Collier: It was done with only one object.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The only outcome of fixing the price for 12 monthly periods has been that the consumer has had the better of the deal. There can be no question on that point.

Hon. P. Collier: Not during this year; over many years perhaps.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Even over this last year. When the price of wheat for local consumption was fixed in January, 1920, for the first 12 monthly period at 7s. 8d. a bushel, it was ascertained that the then overseas parity was equivalent to 8s. 4d. a bushel, but immediately after that price was fixed, the market price of wheat rose, and within two or three months we were receiving for parcels of wheat 16s. a bushel f.o.b. Fremantle.

Hon. P. Collier: For a few isolated small parcels.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Perhaps so, but that was indicative of the price at the time.

Hon. P. Collier: It represented a very small proportion of the whole.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: These are official figures. The overseas realisations for the 1919-20 pool have averaged 10s. a bushel f.o.b., and the price of 7s. 8d. fixed for local consumption gave the consumer an advantage of 2s. 4d. a bushel for the whole of that 12 monthly period. When the price for local consumption was fixed in January of this year, the overseas parity was 10s. 6d. a bushel. The Leader of the Opposition will realise that, during the whole of the previous 12 months and in January of this year, the overseas parity for wheat was 10s. a bushel.

Hon. P. Collier: I have never contended that on the whole we have not had wheat at lower than the overseas parity during the war, but we should not have been called upon to pay that parity.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am referring to the period since the war.

Hon. P. Collier: The same argument applies.

Mr. Troy: Why sell to Germany at 7s. a bushel and charge our people 9s.?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will come to that. Bearing in mind the fact that the overseas parity was 10s. 6d. a bushel when the price was fixed in January last at 9s. a bushel, the overseas realisations for the whole period of the 1920-21 pool to date in respect of the 66½ million bushels exported have averaged over 9s. a bushel. Although at the moment we have a considerable quantity of wheat still on hand, some 25 million bushels,—there is practically no movement at the moment—I want to assure members that the quotes for cargo options received here weekly tend to show that the futures are again slightly on the increase. Our next harvest comes in in December, and futures and options are showing some three cents a bushel above the quotes for November and October.

Hon. P. Collier: I hope that will be so.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is so. The figures supplied to me go to show that our net realisations on the 1920-21 pool, allowing for the fact that we still have 25 million bushels in hand, will amount to approximately 7s. 8d. net, and those figures are conservative. We have exported 66½ million bushels, which have averaged over 9s. a bushel. In face of those figures I certainly cannot follow the argument that the consumer is suffering to anything like the degree represented by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. The consumer during the previous 12 monthly period had the benefit of a margin of 2s. 4d. in his favour, and for the period of the present pool to date he has had a margin of 2d. a bushel in his favour on the export basis. On more than one occasion the Leader of the Opposition has stated, and the remark was repeated by the member for South Fremantle the other night, that the price of wheat for local consumption ought to be fixed at the cost of production plus a reasonable and generous profit to the producer. The cost of production, I presume, would be based upon the Rural Workers' Union demand or the trade union demand for the rural industry.

Hon. P. Collier: Not on their demands; on the existing rate of wages.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition also favoured a reasonable wage for the producer's family.

Mr. Pickering: A generous margin of profit.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Quite so. I do not know how members intend to arrive at the cost of production, but it seems almost impossible to compute what the cost of wheat for local consumption would be.

Hon. P. Collier: An estimate has been made in Victoria and New South Wales, and a very close one too. They can compute it to within one penny.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: All I have seen during the last two years regarding the rural industry has been the demand by the Rural Workers' Union of New South Wales for a wage of £4 a week and keep for children under 18 and £6 a week and keep for harvest hands.

Hon. P. Collier: Tribunals every week fix the cost for commodities which are much more intricate.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: These demands are based on a working week of 44 hours. I wish to give my own experience. I have worked during the harvesting, delivering, seeding, and fallowing periods from 5 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night, without intermission except for meals. If it is intended to apply a system of 44 hours work a week to an industry which is absolutely controlled by seasonal and climatic conditions, and base the cost of production on that, all I can say is that consumers will have to pay a thundering sight more for wheat than they have ever dreamt of paying.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say anything about a 44-hour week. I said the price should be based on the cost of production.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This is one of the demands of the hon. member's organisation.

Hon. P. Collier: But the cost of producing is governed by the wages paid and the hours worked at the time the article is produced.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition and the member for South Fremantle raised their hands in holy horror at the thought of us selling wheat to Germany.

Mr. Corboy: No, for selling it to Germany below the price charged here.

Hon. P. Collier: I have not objected to you selling wheat to Germany.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The only function we have to perform is that of selling the wheat. I do not care whether it is sold to yellow, black, brown or brindle—

Mr. Corboy: Neither do we.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Provided they can put up the necessary money or provided they are prepared to pay for any accommodation they might require. Our sole duty is to sell wheat, and there is no sentiment about the business.

Hon. P. Collier: It is not your duty to sell it at a cheaper rate to those people than to your own people.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But I ask the Leader of the Opposition to consider what it has cost the Germans.

Hon. P. Collier: That is beside the question.

Mr. Pickering: It is not our concern.

Mr. Wilson: You did not say that during the war.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The normal value of the mark was about 20.4 to the pound sterling.

Mr. Corboy: It is a question of what we are getting out of it, not what they are paying.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: On the day of the sale the mark had depreciated to 243 to the pound sterling, and today it is down to 283. That is to say, the rate of exchange against Germany amounts to thirteen times the original basis of sale, and members can compute for themselves what Germany is paying for this wheat. It would be roughly thirteen times 7s. a bushel in addition to the freight, so that this wheat must have cost the consumer in Germany £4 or £5 a bushel.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not the point. Tell us what the producer here received from the sale of this wheat to Germany.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member said the producer; surely he means the consumer.

Hon. P. Collier: No, was not the producer here getting 7s. 7d. a bushel?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member has drifted from the consumer to the producer.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the point.

Mr. Corboy: The Minister has become very considerate as regards the Germans all of a sudden.

Hon. P. Collier: The producer received 7s. 7d. a bushel and you were selling wheat to our own people at 9s. a bushel.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have heard no complaints from the grower in consequence of that. The only complaints have emanated from the hon. member.

Hon. P. Collier: You go out among the consumers a little and you will hear complaints.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I was among 300 or 400 of them this afternoon and heard none.

Hon. P. Collier: You might have heard them from your own side of the House this afternoon.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not hear them. I think it is time some information was accorded not only to shareholders of the pool, but to the community in general with regard to the anticipated realisations of the various wheat pools. On the 24th of this month, when the next meeting of the Australian Wheat Board will be held, it is definitely expected that the first pool, 1915-16, will be wound up. I have a set of figures which will show the House and the public just what the approximate estimate of the realisations of the various pools is. I want hon. members to understand that these figures are on a conservative basis, and that they are only approximate: we do not at the present moment know just where the cut-off in the various pools is, or what the distribution or separation is going to be. I desire to give these figures not only for the benefit of the House, but generally for the benefit of producers, who are interested in the pool. For the 1915-16 pool the payments made, less freight, amounted to 4s. 4¼d. per bushel; and there is a possible further payment on that pool of ¼d. per bushel. For the 1916-17 pool the payments made, less freight, amount to 4s. 1½d. per bushel, with a possible further payment of 1d. For the 1917-8 pool the payments amount to 4s. 9d., with a possible further payment of 2d. For 1918-19 the payments are 5s. 2d., with a possible further payment of 2d. For 1919-20 the payments are 8s. 6d. with a possible further payment of 5d. As regards the 1920-21 pool, the total of payments to date has been 6s. 3d. net, and there is a possibility of a further realisation of 1s. 5d. In the consideration of these pools, which will probably be finalised within the next two or three months, when the payments will be made, account has to be taken of the allocation to this State of its proportion of wheat supplied to New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania. Last week I took the opportunity of laying upon the Table of the House all papers connected with what is known as the sale of wheat to New South Wales. In this respect the separation of the 1919-20 pool will be

materially affected. The supply of wheat to New South Wales was drawn from more than one pool; but if only a proportion of it had been taken out of the 1919-20 pool, the net realisation from that pool would be considerably more. I do not know whether hon. members will be at the pains of reading through the voluminous files laid on the Table in connection with the sale of wheat to New South Wales, but I may say that my opinion, after an exhaustive examination of everything connected with the matter, is honestly and candidly that this State is in honour bound and committed to supply the wheat to New South Wales on that basis.

Hon. P. Collier: We said that at the time.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no question whatever about it.

Mr. Troy: You humbugged the people by saying that it was not so.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Who said it was not so?

Mr. Troy: Your Government.

Hon. P. Collier: I told you last year that we were in honour bound to make the supply. And Colebatch made the contract.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Mr. Colebatch, when he was in Melbourne, said it naturally followed that we must supply New South Wales if the rest of the States did so.

Hon. P. Collier: It is quite clear that we were committed to supply New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not exactly committed to supply New South Wales, but only to get the best possible price. When Mr. Colebatch attended the conference of January, 1920, the only objection raised to the supply of wheat to New South Wales was that, while we were quite prepared to supply that State with its own legitimate requirements for local consumption, we were not prepared to supply the State with wheat to maintain its export flour business at our expense. Are hon. members prepared to admit—leaving New South Wales out of the question altogether—that we would supply anybody with wheat at a price?

Mr. Pickering: Yes, at a price.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, at a price. That was the intention of the pool.

Mr. Troy: We objected to the humbugging. For months the Government of this State carried on a useless correspondence over the matter.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The only humbugging was as regards the Minister controlling the Wheat Scheme. That Minister's colleagues certainly gave him a fair and reasonable opportunity to make good his assertions. I think the hon. member interjecting is prepared to admit that.

Mr. Troy: Admit what?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot keep on repeating what I have said.

Mr. Troy: I say you humbugged the farmer.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When the price was fixed for the sale of wheat to New South Wales, it had been definitely ascertained, as the result of exhaustive inquiries, that the London parity was 8s. 3d. per bushel. In December, 1920, it was thought a fair thing to fix the price of wheat for local consumption as near as possible to the London parity, and it was fixed at 7s. 8d. If we could have sold at that time the whole of the Australian crop at that price, the whole of the Australian crop would have been sold.

Mr. Troy: That is not the point.

Hon. P. Collier: The Australian Wheat Board met in December, just before the Federal elections, and Hughes absolutely objected to any increase in price then. The board met again in January, and the price went up.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I shall postpone the further discussion of the matter until the Bill is submitted to the House. I want to make a full and frank recognition that as regards the return to normal trade when conditions permit it, the farmers' organisations ought to have no fear of private competition, having regard to the generous treatment they have received from the various Governments of this State in the matter of assistance towards the establishment of co-operative companies. In spite of everything that has been said and is being said, the farmers are grateful for the assistance which has been given them. We all believe in co-operative enterprise, and I consider that in this respect the various Governments have performed what is only a legitimate function of administration. When the conditions of shipping and finance permit of a return to an open market in wheat, the farmers' co-operative companies will be in a position, thanks to the Government assistance which they have received, to compete with their rivals. Now I desire to reply to the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter). That hon. member said here on Thursday evening that he had been reliably informed by the farmers of some country centre or other—the hon. member being the representative of a metropolitan constituency—that they were tired of the wheat pool because of the excessive handling costs, excessive as compared with what the work could be done for by private operators. The hon. member stated that pool management was costing 12d. per bushel as compared with 5d. by the private operator.

Capt. Carter: You are misquoting me.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member can look up his words in "Hansard."

Capt. Carter: The Minister is misapplying the source of my information. He knows the source, and therefore I am not repeating it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not care what the source of the information may be.

Capt. Carter: The information has been awaiting contradiction since the 19th June last. It has not been contradicted since by the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know when the matter was made public.

Capt. Carter: On the 18th June.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: By virtue of publication through the Press, I presume.

Capt. Carter: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member asked last Thursday—why, if the charges were not right, they were not refuted?

Capt. Carter: You promised to refute them three weeks ago.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member has been privately contradicted, and after that he brings his charges into the House and still maintains them.

Capt. Carter: The Minister's private contradiction was accompanied by a promise of public contradiction. That is why I brought the matter up in the House.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am taking the first opportunity of making a public contradiction. I am not going to keep on every five minutes announcing that the member for Leederville has said something that wants contradiction. The hon. member stated that the cost of handling wheat through the pool was over 1s. per bushel, whereas under private operators the cost would not exceed 5d. For a start, the average cost of freight from siding to port means 4d. per bushel. If the private operator can do for one penny per bushel all the rest that the State does, I shall certainly say, "Let us go back to a free market and open conditions." Let me give the figures: rail freight from siding to port, 4d. per bushel; port charges, tallying, re-conditioning, storage at Fremantle, and other charges, 1d. per bushel. Those charges will have to be met by the private operator as well.

Mr. Pickering: There is the 5d.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Interest amounts to another 1d. per bushel. We have to finance, and so has the private operator. We pay our country agents one penny per bushel, and the private operator will have to pay his country agents 1d. per bushel; the work cannot be done for less. For the issuing of wheat certificates, and all the work therein involved, the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., get ¼d. per bushel. I understand that the issuing of the certificates is practically the basis of the pool. The overhead charges for administration and all other expenses, including audit fees and proportion of the Australian Wheat Board's expenditure, amounts to ¾d. per bushel. The total cost of administration under the existing system thus amounts to 7¼d. per bushel. Private operators could only do it for 7d. per bushel. In addition, let me say that under pool control we receive at the sidings wheat of every description—smutty, dirty,

or otherwise. We bring it up to a reasonable condition for the farmer through our re-conditioning plant. The private operator would only receive wheat of one description if he was operating at the siding, that is, wheat of fair average quality standard. Anything below that he would reject.

Capt. Carter: Do you infer that there would be no sale for that?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not say that, but it would not be accepted at the siding.

Capt. Carter: There is such a thing as the open market.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have to handle it separately from the other wheat entrusted to our care. We have to stack and rail, and recondition the inferior and smutty wheat altogether apart from the f.a.q. wheat. These charges compare more than favourably, together with the additional work involved in the Scheme management, with the cost that would have to be paid in the case of private operators acquiring wheat. The pool has been an insurance to the whole community against a prospective harvest failure. It has insured the individual wheat being kept in the country not only for local consumption but for seed for the ensuing year. The pool has ensured that whenever the consumer wanted his wheat it was there. He might have it at whatever date he wanted it in f.a.q. condition, stored at the risk and expense of the producer. These are very material advantages which should be taken into consideration when looking into the system of the pooling of wheat.

Mr. Pickering: Were not the millers financed by the pool?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are so many factors in the matter that the hon. member may supplement my remarks when the opportunity arises. I am not going to touch upon the question of the finances. That is the province of my leader, the Treasurer, who has given a capable explanation of the position in which we find ourselves. We are a small community and have entrusted to our administration a territory comprising practically one-third of the continent. We as a small population have done some fine and courageous things. We produce and consumed more per capita than any other State or nation in the globe. We cannot do more without more population. We have run railways here, there, and everywhere within the State. We have made harbour improvements, established water works, and so forth. I should say that we could attract more population to this State very readily by an active propaganda in the Eastern States in regard to a comparative basis of land values between Western Australia and the Eastern States. The removal of population from one part of Australia to another, however, will not get us much further ahead.

Mr. Willcock: It will help us to go ahead.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government are insisting on the fulfilment of the improvement conditions upon land in process of alienation.

Hon. P. Collier: How long since?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Possibly that has only been done of late, but we are causing those conditions to be fulfilled now. The crux of the position is not alone in respect to land in process of alienation, but to land already alienated. I am speaking as an agriculturist. One cannot help noticing—it is only too painfully apparent—that throughout the older settled districts there is an insistent demand for land for cultivation purposes. In our safe rainfall belt within the South-West division, and in our own districts, there is an altogether disproportionate amount of land not being used for those purposes which will give an adequate return by way of freight to the railways, which in turn have been the means of giving to that land its enhanced value.

Mr. Latham: That is true.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In South Australia one finds in going through from Riverton to Adelaide that wheat growing land is bringing £14 per acre. I do not think their first class land is any more productive than ours.

Mr. Mann: It is not.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Owing perhaps to the industry being longer established the South Australians farm well. Our methods here are perhaps more crude owing to our young development. At Bacehus Marsh, near Melbourne, land is bringing up to £120 and £130 per acre. In New South Wales grazing land, which is not used for cultivation, is bringing from £3 to £4 per acre. In other places land reaches the almost fabulous price of £160 per acre. Our remuneration comes perhaps from the surplus we have for export. From that point of view alone there is a distinct scope for the producer in Western Australia as compared with his fellow man in the Eastern States. Our land values are absurdly low, and by virtue of that fact we are possibly allowed to follow the line of least resistance in regard to production. My opinion is that something ought to be done to force into its proper use those lands which are being used for sheep farming but are suitable for cultivation.

Mr. Troy: You have changed your mind three times.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have not changed my mind on this matter. Land which is only carrying sheep will not support many people. I am not going to talk about the ethics of land values taxation for the forcing into occupation of idle land.

Mr. Willcock: Is there any other method?

Mr. Troy: You ought to give us something now.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I may take a shorter and more direct course to get what we want. We want to make these lands in our older agricultural areas,

which are not providing freight for our railways, produce something more. The easiest method of accomplishing that, is, not by moving motions in the House on the ethical side of the question, but by amending the Land Tax and Income Tax Assessment Act and increasing the rates for land which is not improved within the meaning of the Act. If we increase the present rates by twopence or threepence in the pound we take a short cut towards bringing into effect that which we want, namely, to make the people holding so much land to-day bring it into full use. A large proportion of our agricultural land is being used for pastoral pursuits, gives very little employment to people, and but little freight for the railways. When there is this insistent demand for land for cultivation purposes we ought to endeavour to supply that demand. We can only do this by the means I propose. The Government are doing their utmost to-day to enforce the provisions appertaining to land in process of alienation.

Mr. Troy: What are you doing in the case of land already alienated?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have shown how that position can be remedied.

Mr. Willecock: If it is cleared and fenced and has water on it, it is fully improved, and the people can run stock upon it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The world seems to be full of paradoxes. We see our National Parliament struggling and striving to create an artificial tariff to promote the secondary industries of this country, and this tariff can only operate against primary production. Nature and opportunity—the opportunity of war devastation in regard to the supply of raw materials—have given us our chance, and now we are getting this tariff which, as I say, operates against our primary production.

Mr. J. Thomson: Question?

Hon. P. Collier: There is no question about it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It seems to be nothing short of suicidal. In addition to the tariff there is a further imposition, in that our primary products to-day and henceforth will have to pay double freights to the markets of the world by virtue of the fact that we shall want nothing back in return. A community only lives on the exchange of its commodities for the commodities of other countries. During the past four years every tin-pot place on the Continent and in America has been converted into a factory for destructive elements. These are now being gradually reconverted into factories for various commodities. During this time we have had an opportunity of supplying raw materials to the fullest possible extent. In Australia, owing to our climatic conditions, we can get a maximum effort per man power compared with any other country in the world. There is an apparent paradox in this plan of bolstering

up the secondary industries at the expense of our primary industries. We produce the finest class of wool in the world, and also the best wheat in the world.

Mr. Pickering: And the best iron.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Although we produce the best merino hose in the world, we have a community that demands nothing but silken goods. On top of this tendency we have had to resort in this young and undeveloped country to the most scientific methods of taxation, getting down to fine actuarial bases, at the instigation of the Commonwealth Commissioner of Taxation, with the result that it is absolutely crippling our mining industry. I am sure that if the member for Claremont (Mr. J. Thomson) were interested he would agree that our main primary industry is being crippled.

Mr. J. Thomson: You have spent too much time with the Premier.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The member for Claremont does not know what I am speaking about. When we look at the position to-day, we wonder why we ever entered Federation. New Zealand kept out of Federation and when we compare the position of New Zealand to-day with that of Western Australia, the question naturally arises as to why we ever entered into the Federal compact.

Mr. Pickering: Yet we want to hand over other things to the Commonwealth.

Mr. Lambert: It was your Government who handed over the Taxation Department to them.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We did nothing of the sort. I would like to hand the hon. member over to the Commonwealth.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, we could hand over all our non-essentials.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am a little bit diffident in agreeing with the Leader of the Opposition because, in common with himself, I might be included among the non-essentials.

Mr. Lambert: You can take that for granted.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Notwithstanding the position as we find it to-day, however, I do not despair. We often have it held up against Western Australia that its finances are in an awful condition, and that its overdraft is a big one. I have been up against an overdraft myself practically all my life and I am looking pretty well on it. I have maintained my position against it. If we as a State face our position courageously, the trivial deficit is as nothing compared with the prospects ahead of us. Within the last few days we know that we have not only struck oil but also, I hope, a decent coal seam at last.

Mr. J. Thomson: At last?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will leave the member for Irwin (Mr. C. C. Maley) to proclaim the virtues of the Irwin coal seam. I do not know what the quality of the coal will prove to be, but if we can