

that before I got home there would be a thunderstorm and I would not require scheme water. I hope the present Government will not deal with requests in that manner. Later the Mitchell Government promised to assist the people of my district with key dams. Departmental engineers have gone through the country and made certain investigations. Travelling through the eastern wheat belt, and especially the far east, where the ground is quite dry as far as the running of water is concerned, one finds that every eight or ten miles there are large rocks, which seem to have been put there by Nature to serve that country. I have to thank the present Minister for Water Supply, Mr. Cunningham, for the assistance he has given me. He has never yet told me to go home and await a thunderstorm. He has promised to help in the matter of water supply for the wheat belt. The hon. gentleman tells me that he is going up to that country with the Chief Engineer for Water Supply shortly, when I hope the problems I have mentioned will be investigated and money found to construct key dams. The matter is one of the most important we have to deal with in regard to the settlement of the wheat belt. In many cases it is not possible for the farmer to provide water for himself, his country being flat and occasionally not good holding ground. Water should be supplied through the natural channels and means that Nature has furnished.

Mr. WITHERS (Bunbury) [9.34]: First of all I join in congratulations to the Premier and his Ministers on attaining power, and in the congratulations which have been offered to you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to a high and honourable position. I also desire to extend congratulations to myself, on the fact that I am a member of the party now in power. One naturally likes to be on the Government side, where one has an opportunity of at all events endeavouring to ensure that the promises put before the people from the hustings are carried into effect. With one's party out of power, one has no opportunity of doing that. I may be a little parochial tonight, but this is my first speech, and the subject is the Address-in-reply. Glancing through the Governor's Speech I noticed that there was mention of the Fremantle harbour and the Geraldton harbour. Without denying those ports the right to have their harbours improved, I certainly think Bunbury harbour is entitled to consideration at the hands of the present Government, having been neglected by previous Administrations.

Mr. George: Plenty of money has been spent there, anyhow.

Mr. WITHERS: I put forward Bunbury's claim because prior to the war, during the first five years of the Bunbury Harbour Board's existence, some £20,000 were remitted from Bunbury to the Treasury. Upon the outbreak of war Bunbury, the second port of Western Australia, largely

lost its trade, owing to exports being severely affected by the hostilities. Bunbury harbour, owing to the war, lost some £20,000 of revenue in four years. Notwithstanding that loss, however, Bunbury's contributions to the Consolidated Revenue during the years from 1921 to 1923 inclusive amounted to over £4,000. Thus there has been paid into Consolidated Revenue by the Bunbury Harbour Board, after allowance has been made for war losses, a total of some £26,000. Reading the latest report of the Bunbury Harbour Board I observe that exports have been increasing. The board predict that the ensuing twelve months will represent a further improvement. From inquiries made of the board I know that the year has been a record one for tonnage dealt with, and also for remittances to the Treasury. Those facts afford some justification for giving consideration in the near future to the claims of Bunbury harbour. The draught of vessels is getting deeper and deeper, and in Bunbury harbour one is down to rock at 27 feet. The oversea boats of 1912, 1913, and 1914 could call to-day at Bunbury and berth at the same berths as they occupied in those years. But to-day we are getting vessels up to 10,000, 11,000 and 12,000 tons. Hence the necessity for the increase requested by the deputation. Last year the fruit-growers of the Bridgetown district lost heavily on the export of their fruit. The "Bakara," which was coming to Bunbury to lift fruit, was discovered to have something wrong with her at her last port of call in the Eastern States, and she was ordered into dock. The "Fordsdale" was substituted, but as she drew 30 feet, she could not come into Bunbury harbour. Bunbury being her last port of loading, she was naturally down to about Plimsoll mark before she arrived here. In consequence the fruit to be shipped in that boat had to go to Fremantle. The Bridgetown growers are at an average distance of only 67 miles from Bunbury, and shipping their fruit via Fremantle involved an additional 115 miles of railage. If Bunbury harbour had better berths, the State steamers would call there. At present, however, that is impracticable. The Minister for Works has given us consideration by purchasing a Commonwealth dredge now lying at Albany, with a view to its being utilised at Bunbury. This is to be done as soon as the deal is completed with the Federal Government. Speaking to the Minister for Works on the subject a little while ago, I was informed by him that everything was in order, but that the Commonwealth Government wanted the cash. It was a hardship on the new Government coming into office to find such conditions existing. I learn now that the conditions of sale and purchase have been agreed upon except as regards one proviso, that the Commonwealth Government reserve the right to take the boat away from Bunbury at any time they desire. My own view is that not much difficulty is involved. The proviso most likely is only an urgency measure, to be used in

case of anything unforeseen occurring. Bunbury jetty has been extended year by year, until it is now like a dog's hind leg and runs about a mile out to sea. Ever since 1896 the Bunbury breakwater has been under construction, and has been extended and again extended. I trust that the new Engineer-in-Chief will be a man with an understanding of harbours and docks. He should be sent to Bunbury to find out where the residents could get a harbour that would suit the South-Western export trade of the future. Timber, of course, has so far been the principal export from Bunbury. However, we are looking forward to the time when the life of our native timbers will have to be conserved and its exportation restricted considerably. In that case we of Bunbury will have to look to other exports, principally the export of agricultural products. If the group settlements succeed in the manner that has been suggested, the South-West will become the salvation of Western Australia. The South-West will have to be looked to for the supply of all our dairy products. It is ideal country for dairying, pig raising, and the like. In no other part of the State can the dairying industry be fostered as in the South-West. Until the people there had thoroughly realised what the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) mentioned to-night, as to dairying by proper methods, they produced more butter than the people available to purchase it could consume. That was 35 years ago. What happened then? The people who were producing the butter were making more butter than could be sold, simply because other people were not there to buy it. Having large holdings and pastures, they turned their attention to stock raising, and produced on the country we now call the north coast lands some of the finest, if not the most numerous herds ever known in Western Australia. Some of those cattle have been on exhibition and they are a good example of what can be produced in the South-West. I trust that the Government will be able to do something in that regard, although the financial position is not very satisfactory. The member for Perth (Mr. Mann) mentioned coal. I recognise that we in Bunbury are almost at the pit's mouth of Collie, but the railage from Collie to Bunbury presents practically the same difficulties as those experienced by the fruit-growing industry. I have been informed by the manager of the Amalgamated Collieries that it costs something like 6s. per ton more to bunker coal at Fremantle than at Bunbury and this increase is caused by the additional freight. The effect of this increase in the price of Collie coal means that at Fremantle it can only be procured for bunkering purposes at a cost little below that of Newcastle coal, which is regarded by some as the better article. In the circumstances it is not strange that many shipowners prefer to pay the extra few shillings in order to get Newcastle coal. Doubtless if they could procure

the Collie coal at 6s. per ton less it would be an inducement for them to take the local article rather than the imported. If berthing accommodation were provided at Bunbury so that ships of a deeper draught could utilise that port, the bunkering would be done at its natural port.

Mr. Mann: Where do the South African boats bunker coal, at Durban or Bunbury?

Mr. WITHERS: Mostly at Durban.

Mr. Panton: Where there is black labour available.

Mr. WITHERS: Most of the South African boats that call at Bunbury for timber are run by the South African Government, and it is only natural that they should utilise their own product. Much has been said regarding our education system, of which we have boasted for years that it is one of the best in the world. We have boasted of our free education; in theory the system is all right, but in practice I do not think it comes up to the standard we would desire. I have had personal experience in sending my children to the High School at Bunbury, and I do not think that institution is functioning as was intended. I admit that the system of establishing high schools in the country districts is in its infancy, and naturally some consideration must be extended to the department on that score. Children are not allowed to leave school until they have reached the age of 14 years. The average youth reaches the sixth standard at 13 years of age, if he has any ability or brains at all. When a lad attains that age at Bunbury, and passes through the sixth standard, he has to go to the High School in order to enter the seventh standard, and that means a large increase in expenditure. Had I bought new books for my girls who attended the High School, it would have cost me about £10; by purchasing secondhand books I paid about £7 10s. I know of an instance where a boy had reached the sixth standard and his record was one of distinction. His parents were in poor circumstances. Either he had to go to the High School to continue his education, or he had to remain in the sixth standard at the State School until he reached 14 years of age. The result was that he had to stay in the sixth standard for a year, during which he re-learnt what he had been taught during the previous year. A child should be given facilities that will enable him to pass through the seventh standard, so that he may at least have a reasonable education in which to start out in life. As it is, many children are debarred from the advantages of the higher standards because their parents cannot afford the additional expenditure. Children do not realise what they miss at that age, but it is only in after life that they will feel the effects of their restricted education. In the latest report of the Education Department reference is made to manual training in the State schools, and it is stated that boys in the fifth standard have the benefit of that type of education.

At Bunbury the manual section has been transferred to the High School. This means that if a boy's parents can afford to send him to the High School, he will have only one year's tuition in manual work and that is not of much use. I have the support of the staff of the Bunbury State School in my contention that the seventh standard should be restored to that institution, and I believe the department have that matter in hand as well as the re-introduction of the manual classes. The same position arises in connection with the girls' course in domestic science. A girl attending the Modern School can decide what course she will pursue. If she desires to be a tailoress, or to go in for dress-cutting or millinery, she has the opportunity, when she enters the seventh standard, of being taught a course in accordance with her desires throughout her stay at that institution. Another trouble with the High School—

Mr. Mann: Do you want to get rid of that institution?

Mr. WITHERS: The trouble is that commercial education is not dealt with at that institution. I wished one of my girls to undergo a course of training in commercial subjects, and I had to send her either to a night school or to private classes. Children should have an opportunity of getting that type of education at the High School. Reference was made to the selection of a site for the agricultural college. I do not know whether consideration has been given to the south-west portion of the State in the selection of the site. Training that a lad will receive on a farm in the wheat belt is not that required for a lad who will be engaged in developing land in the South-West, where the country is heavily timbered. There is no comparison between the two methods of cultivation and an agricultural college should be established in some part of the South-West, for it is obvious that farming in the group settlement areas is different from that carried on in the wheat belt. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) mentioned that there was too much land in his electorate that was not linked up with railways. In the South-West the position is reversed, for we have too great a mileage of railway. The time is ripe, therefore, for the introduction of the measure foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech in connection with land taxation. I trust that when the measure is in operation we will find that areas such as those between Pinjarra and Pemberton will be forced into a state of productivity. When passing some of the land people in trains are apt to say that that land is not worth clearing. I have had experience in the South-West for over 30 years and I know that part of the State very well.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You try to buy that land that they say is not worth clearing!

Mr. WITHERS: In one part of the district I have seen subterranean clover growing luxuriantly on land that no one would

clear 15 or 20 years ago. To-day that land could not be bought for £50 an acre. There are hundreds of acres of the same class of land available in that particular district. I believe the dairying industry, under proper direction, can be made a success. Mention was made in the Speech of the Government's intention to introduce a Bill to deal with main roads. I come from an electorate where good main roads and good feeder roads are urgently required. I am sorry the Minister for Works has seen fit to close the quarry at Roelands. Although that concern may not have been paying, it has proved of wonderful value to the south-western districts. The stone was produced so cheaply, apparently, that the Government had to close down the quarry. I have been in communication with the local authorities at Bunbury and have been informed that it is suggested locally that the quarry should be taken over by the local bodies, and a smaller plant installed. In this way, with proper crushing and grading, supplies of stone could be provided at 6s. per ton. That will be a satisfactory price as against the present rate in and around Bunbury of something like 14s. per ton. All we require, if we are allowed to take over the quarry and place it under the control of the local authority, is fair consideration from the Railway Department regarding freights. In the past those charges worked out at about 1d. per ton per mile, and if we get the same consideration and also have the benefit of assistance from the Federal road grant, we will be able to do a lot in providing better roads throughout the south-western districts. Another question in relation to the railway service concerns cottages for railway employees. I notice that the Commissioner of Railways, in his report, states that a number of these cottages have been established in the country districts in particular. That is a worthy action on the part of the Commissioner and I believe it is capable of further extension. I know that in Bunbury it is a difficult matter to get a decent house at anything like a fair rental.

The Minister for Railways: The same applies to Perth.

Mr. WITHERS: But in Perth there are better facilities available. I would also like to see excursion trains run more frequently in the South-West. Many people avail themselves of those excursions during the summer months and I think they would take advantage of winter excursions, if they were provided. A burning question in Bunbury is that of the removal of the loco workshops. They are to-day exactly where they were in 1895, notwithstanding the expansion of the trade of the port. I know that the Railway Department has advocated their removal. It means a cost of some £35,000. That will be an important question for the Minister when bringing down his Estimates. It is

essential that something should be done. Another question regarding the railways that was not mentioned in the Speech, but which, I hope, will be considered, is the superannuation scheme. This scheme was turned down by a big majority, it being found altogether impossible for any working man. It meant nothing short of a reduction of wages. Under that scheme a man would have to pay as much on account of his superannuation as he now pays in rent. An improved scheme should be brought forward for the railway men, because after having brought up a family a man, on being retired from his position, has practically nothing whatever to depend upon.

Mr. Mann: Superannuation has worked well in the Police Department.

The Minister for Railways: Why it is absolutely insolvent!

Mr. WITHERS: Another question affecting the Railway Department is the long service leave, which was lost by one vote. I hope that will be given further consideration. The men of the service are very much disappointed at having missed the concession after getting so close to it.

Mr. Latham: That is a matter for the Government.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The Government could grant it to-morrow.

Mr. WITHERS: Then there is the question of Government hospitals in the country. Indigent people going into those hospitals are forced to pay, even though they cannot afford it. I know of a man with a family of seven children who, after his wife had been in hospital, was met with a bill of £22 12s. 6d. He went on paying it off as well as he could from time to time, but eventually fell ill himself. With nothing coming in for weeks, naturally he got into arrears with this hospital account. Then he received a summons for those arrears, and with it a bill for £1 9s. costs. I know of another instance of a man who fell into arrears in similar circumstances and who had exactly the same experience. Since we have these Government institutions for the relief of the sick, there should be some tribunal to go into such cases and treat them on their merits. Again, I have it on good authority that the food supplied to patients at those hospitals is not of a nourishing nature. One patient I know of, requiring special food and being unable to pay for it, received that food through the kindness of the doctor. Now one more point and I am finished: I hope the Government will be able, if not this session at all events next session, to raise the exemption from income tax. It is one of the planks of their party platform.

Mr. Latham: Raise it to what, £1,000?

Mr. WITHERS: No, £300 would do for the time being, and would bring it into line with the Commonwealth exemptions. One man, attending a deputation to the Minister for Railways recently, told the Minister that the policy of the party was a means of raising revenue. If that be so, I think we

ought to be able to use that policy as a means of raising the exemption from income tax. I hope that when the Estimates come down we shall find in them provision in respect of some of the matters I have mentioned; if not I shall take occasion to mention them all again.

On motion by Mr. Mann, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 6th August, 1924.*

	Page
Questions: Arbitration Royal Commission ...	153
Cattle from North-West, Embargo ...	153
Leave of Absence ...	154
Address-in-reply, Fifth day ...	154

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION—ARBITRATION ROYAL COMMISSION.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Will he supply details of the expenditure incurred in connection with the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the working of the Industrial Arbitration Act and other matters? 2, Will he lay upon the Table the file covering the appointment and dissolution of the commission?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, The file, including details of expenditure, has been placed on the Table to-day.

### QUESTION—CATTLE FROM NORTH-WEST, EMBARGO.

Hon. J. EWING asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Will he lay on the Table of the House papers dealing with the raising of the embargo on tick cattle from the North-West entering the southern portion of the State? 2, How many of these cattle have entered the southern districts since the embargo was removed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: I am tabling the file this afternoon, but I ask that the other portion of the question be postponed until to-morrow.