

railway facilities for those districts which to-day are producing large quantities of commodities but have not the needful facilities to get those commodities away to the markets that are offering.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 12th August, 1924.*

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

### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Standard Survey Marks.
- 2, High School.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary.

### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £1,863,500.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Seventh Day.*

Debate resumed from the 7th August.

Hon. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.38]: I desire to associate myself with the congratulations and welcome extended to the Leader of the House, to the Honorary Minister, and to the new members. In my opinion the present session will be one of the most momentous in the history of the State. Although we have had Labour Governments before, we have never had one at such a time when the whole trend of popular opinion the world over has been in the same direction. I congratulate Mr. Drew. I did not know him before I entered this Chamber, but long before he was returned on this occasion, I had heard him spoken of from both sides of the House in terms of high commendation. My short acquaint-

ance with him satisfies me that he will uphold the reputation he made previously when he occupied the position of Leader of the House. The Colonial Secretary has a very difficult task in this Chamber, but I think Mr. Drew will be able to carry it out with credit to himself and good to the country. Various speakers on the Address have stressed the non-party character of this Chamber. That shows how utterly divorced they are from public opinion. This House is in very bad odour with the common people.

Hon. J. Ewing: This House?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, owing to the class-nature of its legislation; and it is held in contempt by numbers of members of all political parties because of its rash conservatism.

Hon. J. Ewing: I wish they would put it to the test.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why, it is more democratic than the other place! We have been told so.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The truth of my statement is demonstrated by the very small number of voters that go to the poll in any constituency where Labour is not well represented on the rolls. Members should sit up and take notice of the trend of public opinion and endeavour to meet the demands for progressive legislation that have been made through the Lower House.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Why are they not represented on the rolls?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Because the constitution of this House is one of the most conservative in the British Empire.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You do not know anything about it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If this House met the demand for more progressive legislation, it would make for a more effective Chamber.

Hon. J. Cornell: How do you account for a 44 per cent. poll at the Federal elections?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Wherever there are working people within reasonable access of the booths, far bigger numbers of electors go to the poll than in other parts. We have the astounding state of affairs that the working people in some parts of the State have no representation whatever in this House. In the timber areas there are hundreds of men who, through the nature of their calling, can have no say whatever in the constitution of this House. It is time an alteration was made, so that every man and woman over the age of 21 should have a say as to who shall represent them in this Chamber.

Hon. A. Lovekin: How many do not pay 6s. per week?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Mr. Hamersley commented upon the absence of a guard of honour and other display at the opening of Parliament and asked the reason. I think the Premier accurately interpreted public opinion by abolishing the guard of honour. I would rather have a guard of honour representing bibles than bayonets. But



if a guard of honour were necessary, it should be drawn from the boys and girls attending the public schools in the metropolitan area, so that members would be reminded that the legislative efforts they were about to put forth would have a vital effect for good or evil upon the rising generation.

Hon. J. Cornell: Whom would you draw upon if the Japs came here?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I confess to having a weakness for display and brass bands. It has been stated in the Press that it is time Parliament obtained a new flag on account of the present one being somewhat dilapidated.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are you going to put up the red flag?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I suggest that a new Australian flag be purchased.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Why?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Because it represents the national aspirations. The man that sticks close to the Australian flag sticks close also to the Union Jack. In order to conform with public opinion I would also have the League of Nations flag flying beneath it. I am of opinion that the working class and all people that think at all have come to the conclusion it is time we had more international understandings. If we had, there would be a better chance to abolish war. Mr. Holmes and Mr. Lovekin made lengthy speeches harshly criticising the late Government. I do not intend to imitate that attitude, but will let the dead past bury its dead. Mr. Holmes stated in his speech what were the aims and objects of every party. In his opinion, the aim and object of the Labour Party, when going before the electors, were State trading and day labour, while the other parties preferred private enterprise and contract work. Heaven forbid that the things ascribed by Mr. Holmes to the Labour Party should be their only desires for the benefit of the common people.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Who are the common people?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The people who work in shops, factories, and so forth.

Hon. J. Duffell: What is the difference between the common people and the under dog?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There are various degrees of common people and of under dogs. Generally speaking, "the common people" means the people who are about a week off starvation. Legislation should be passed enabling those people to obtain a share of the benefits of life and of the wealth produced by the labour of the community. The Labour Party's chief object is to make things better for the majority of the people, and thus confer a benefit upon the whole nation, including those classes that are now comfortable and happy. The 44-hour week regulation

issued by the Government was discussed on the Supply Bill. I was surprised at the relay of speakers against the Government. Why should not that regulation have been passed, seeing that the Government's policy is a 44-hour week? The least we look for from Governments is that by living up to their ideals they should set an example to other employers. In reintroducing the 44-hour week the Government were merely keeping their word given to the people during the general election. Mr. Seddon's remarks were apparently intended to prove that industry was resting on the apex of the pyramid and not on its base. They are a sign to me that some people stand with their heads buried in the dust of conservatism and with their feet in the air. To show how wrong Mr. Seddon is, let me point out that similar arguments were used 82 years ago in the British Parliament, and later on in Australian Parliaments, whenever progressive legislation was introduced. I propose to quote certain arguments used at Home in 1842, 82 years ago. Let me express the hope that 80 years hence some Australian member of Parliament will read Mr. Seddon's arguments against the introduction of the 44-hour week and show how frivolous Mr. Seddon's reasoning was. In 1842 things were at a low ebb in the coal mining industry of the Old Country. I am taking this information from a book written by Mr. A. A. Wilson, M.L.A., which, besides describing the low condition of the industry, gives excerpts from the British "Hansard" of that period. At that time progressive thought, as represented by members of Parliament, had arrived at the conclusion that the work of women and children in coal mines should be abolished. A mass of facts and figures was adduced to show that the abolition ought not to take place, as it would spell disaster to the country. The Marquis of Londonderry of that day said—

Some coal seams required the employment of women. He believed that if the employment of female labour was interdicted, the result would be that the working of many collieries would be abandoned. With regard to the age at which boys should be employed in these collieries, he thought they were as fit for work at the age of eight as when they were ten. If they refused to permit boys to be employed in this work before they arrived at the age of 10 years, how were the colliers to bring up and educate their children?

Lord Wharncliffe is reported as follows:—

With respect to the employment of females, he thought it had not yet been satisfactorily proved that it was advisable to prevent women from working in collieries. He hailed with satisfaction the alternative allowing boys of ten to work.



To-day in Collie we have the remarkable spectacle of men working six hours a day and producing more coal, per man, than any other coal miners in the world.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is the contract system. Those miners all work under contract.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Yes, that is not day labour.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is taking place 82 years after members of the British Parliament spoke against legislation for taking women and children out of the mines and letting them live in God's pure air. The possibility of the shorter hours is due to the application of science and invention to industry. It is not suggested for a moment that men working the 44-hour week should give all their spare time to idleness. Is it not a fact that every business concern in the British Empire which has adopted the short hours principle has won success? Take the Sunlight soap people. They were one of the first firms in the Old Country to introduce short hours, and what firm has gained more splendid success than they? Again, there is the Cadbury chocolate firm.

Hon. A. Lovekin: How many hours do Cadbury's work?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: They were working eight hours, I think; but when they introduced the eight-hour day other industries were working 16 hours. Yet the eight-hour firm beat the others in the markets of the world.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Those firms had the benefit of protection in England.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Take the Ford motor-car people. Mr. Ford has actually said that it would be better for men to work only 36 hours a week; and where does one find a greater industrial success than his? Organised labour is beginning to see that reduction of hours is the one true gain that the worker cannot have filched from him by the machinations of capitalism, and that it reduces unemployment. As has been demonstrated here time and again, high wages can be taken away from the worker; but a reduction of hours cannot be taken from him either by rigging the market or by any other means. It is amusing to hear the strings of arguments against the 44-hour week which are adduced by men who generally begin to work at 10 a.m. and finish at about 4 p.m.

Hon. J. Cornell: I plead guilty to not working at all.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I would not plead guilty to that. During the recent Parliamentary tour through the Midland Junction workshops we saw what machinery can do. There was a dog-spike machine turning out 13,000 dogs per day, whereas a few years ago it was only possible to turn out 400 per day by hand labour. Boiler plates were shown to us being fixed up by machinery.

To-day three can be dealt with in a day, while less than 20 years ago it took one week to do one plate. Surely the workers should not be denied a share in the benefits derived by industry from science and invention. I was somewhat taken aback by Mr. Cornell's contention that Government employees are for the most part an appendix that is necessary to the continued well-being of the institutions controlled by the Government, but that they produce no wealth. That statement will hardly be received with any degree of enthusiasm by the thousands of workers in the Government service. I always understood that any man who did labour, as long as it was well directed, produced wealth or increased wealth.

Hon. J. Cornell: The man I had in mind produces no more wealth than a member of Parliament, and that is very little.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Mr. Nicholson made a mild attack upon the Bill to fix rents which is to be submitted by the Government. He put up what seemed a good case for the mass production of houses. The trouble is that there is no money available for a large production of houses by the Government, owing to the deplorable state of the finances. Therefore the Government must do the next best thing, which is to introduce a law to fix rents. That law will not affect the landlord who tries to do a fair thing, but it will affect the landlord who is absolutely bleeding the whole of the people, and not only the business people, in the metropolitan area. It is high time such a measure were enacted, and I am pleased to see it mentioned in the Governor's Speech.

Hon. J. Cornell: What is the good of the Fair Rents Act in Sydney?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The trouble is that there is no Labour Government in operation in New South Wales. Parliaments can pass Acts by the dozen, but they are valueless unless enforced. I wish to refer to the report of the Education Department that was laid on the Table of the House last week. It contains a very important paragraph of which I think members should take notice. It refers to the employment of school children and says—

There is urgent need of legislation which will prevent the improper employment of children of school age. It is useless to make education compulsory if children can be employed in such a way that their health is injured and that they cannot gain the benefits that the school should provide. During the last year some shocking cases have been brought under the notice of the department. Until legislation is passed, it is impossible to take any effective action. One boy aged 12½ starts delivering papers every morning at 5.45, finishing his round at 8.15. He is naturally unfit for school. The medical officer states that his health is adversely affected. His father and



elder brother are regularly employed in the Government service.

I know what I would do in a case like that; I would take drastic action and sack the father. The department recognise that there is urgent need for legislation, and it is high time that it was introduced to prevent this sort of thing occurring. I hope the Leader of the House will stand to the report of his officers and if possible this session introduce a measure that will have the effect of abolishing child labour.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It is not mentioned in the Governor's Speech.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: But it is mentioned in the report of the department. Still further dealing with the Education Department, and remembering the state of the finances and the fact that most of the metropolitan schools are overcrowded, as well also as the fact that a number of students have to pay their railway fares in order to reach the places of learning, I think there is every need in this respect to overhaul the accounts of the department. I have no desire to detain members at any length on this subject, but there is a special item in connection with the Education Vote to which I wish to refer. A sum of £13,629 was voted for driving children to school. What I intend to tell the House is information gathered from actual experience. The sum could be greatly curtailed, at any rate to one-half. The object of the vote is to enable children living long distances from school to get there by means of a conveyance. On the other hand, the department admits that the vote does not accomplish what it sets out to do. For instance, there are schools where the attendance does not exceed eight, nine, or 10. A new settler going on the land very rarely has a spare horse that his children can ride or drive to school; he must wait 12 months or two years before he can acquire a horse for this purpose, though I admit, in some instances, it is possible for him to borrow his neighbour's horse. In the main, however, the new settler does not benefit from the driving allowance, and, on the other hand, it causes a lot of expense to the department by reason of the department having to pay for the conveyance of the children of wealthy farmers, who are not slow to take advantage of this vote. In many instances well-to-do farmers have received as much as 15s. a week from the department in this respect. I suggest that this is a matter into which the Minister should make inquiries.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: I thought you objected to one law for the rich and one for the poor.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do. City children have to travel sometimes four and five miles to school and they must pay their own fares. I have no objection to assistance being given to country people, but a broad view should be taken of the position, and, if necessary, the distance could be extended from three to five miles.

Hon. J. Cornell: Where in the metropolitan area do school children travel five miles?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Many have to travel from Cottesloe to Perth.

Hon. J. Cornell: Yes, to attend secondary schools.

Hon. J. Ewing: The position is exactly the same in the country.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I object to workers' children having to walk or to pay, while the children of well-to-do farmers are assisted from the Education Vote.

Hon. J. Cornell: My boy gets a pass to school and he is only in the seventh standard.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There are any number of boys and girls in the sixth and seventh standards who have to pay. If the hon. member will inquire at the department to-morrow morning he will find that my statement is correct. I am not in the habit of making mis-statements in this House, and I repeat that this vote should be overhauled and then reduced. One boy driving to school receives 6d. a day and if there are five in the same family the amount is 2s. 6d. and so on. There should be a maximum allowance ranging from 6d. to 1s. 6d., according to the number in the family. Another education matter to which I desire to refer deals with stationery. The amount spent annually on books and stationery and other school requisites runs to nearly £13,000 and the parents of the pupils have to pay that amount. The stationery is generally purchased in small shops which usually yield a big profit. I suggest that if the Government cannot afford to provide school requisites free of charge, they should start their own store and handle all the materials with the aid of the teachers.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Most of these things are fads of the department.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Children attending school could then acquire their requisites at a much cheaper cost, because the Government would secure them at wholesale prices and would not need to make an enormous profit. In this way everybody would benefit. I know that the shopkeepers would not like this, but the Government should never hesitate to do that which is of advantage and a benefit to the community. I congratulate the North-West representatives on the enthusiasm they display whenever they refer to that part of the State. I have seen a little of the North-West myself, and what I have seen induces me to share their enthusiasm. The North-West has been locked up and progress stopped through mal-administration and on the part of the previous Government's action in extending the pastoral leases in the manner they did. I do not hesitate to say that if Mr. Miles inserted an advertisement in the paper to-morrow morning, inviting 400 young fellows to go to the North, he would have no difficulty in getting many more than that number, provided, of course, that he as-



sured them good homes and decent living conditions. The hon. member must have received any number of letters from people who desired that their sons should go to the North. I know that many have come my way. Finding avenues of employment for the young men of to-day has become a serious problem. Hundreds of lads deteriorate because they cannot get work to do. Boys who leave school are not big enough to take men's jobs, and the consequence is that they waste a valuable period of their lives in city employment.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the apprenticeship question?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: You cannot find work for apprentices. What is the position to-day? I know of a case where a high Government official trained his lad to be an engineer and, on account of there being no proper outlet, that boy is now serving behind a counter.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And yet you are advocating the establishment of more high schools.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The question of apprenticeship will not solve the difficulty.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is there not a scarcity of bricklayers and carpenters here?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That will not solve it either. Moreover, there are any number of them out of work to-day.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They do not want work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I can find all the carpenters the hon. member wants in two hours.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What is your proposal that will solve the difficulty?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It is a suggestion. We have in the North-West 7,000 whites, whilst in the Kimberleys the number is 2,000. Against these figures there are 23,000 aborigines. Of the total number of natives only 4,000 men, women, boys and girls are working. You cannot send the youths from the southern parts to the North-West. I have devoted some attention to this question and have interviewed a number of station managers and pastoralists themselves, and I have not met a man yet who has advocated sending lads from 16 years of age upwards to the North to work. They almost invariably reply, "Let them remain in the south until they are men because of the dangers arising from the native question." Seeing that there are 23,000 natives in the North, and a very small proportion of them only working, a scheme ought to be prepared by which the natives could be segregated with big reservations in different parts of the North, where no white men other than officials should have access. If that were done it would then be possible for the youth of the State to go to the North-West after leaving school. The average youth has read about the North-West and in fact every part of Australia.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We want group settlers up there; close settlement is what is wanted in the North.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Motor cars, telephones and other things have completely transformed the North-West. There is no doubt that they are splendid people who live there. All the comforts, advantages and enjoyment of the North, however, are concentrated around the homes of the station owners or the managers. In order to effectively deal with the native question there should be small settlements around every station. Take a million acre proposition on the Gascoyne—

Hon. G. W. Miles: There are not any.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have seen some. Most of these big properties employ only about 12 men. If six of these men were married, the station owner, if he were a progressive man, could build for these six families a residence on the station, and the families could be reared there. The children could be educated on the place, even if they had a trip to the coast once a year, at a cheaper price than many children in the agricultural districts can be educated. Furthermore, they would be brought up to station life. It strikes me that there are good opportunities in this direction, provided the native question is dealt with, of raising a race of young Australians inured to the conditions and the climate instead of at present, possibly raising a polyglot race. That is a question worthy of consideration. Considering the enormous wealth that is produced on these stations, an obligation is cast on these owners to make an attempt to solve the difficulty. It would not be an expensive matter to erect homes for the men who are employed, and I hope that station owners will see the advantage of adopting the suggestion. Interwoven with the question of populating the North is the shipping question, and that of meat markets. The present Government are fully alive to the necessity for increasing the State Steamship Service and abolishing the black labour boats along our coast. Alternatively, let them abolish the black labour boats and increase the white service boats.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You do not propose to cut out the four boats altogether?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I want to see more boats on the coast. The present service is unsatisfactory. We frequently see black labour boats cutting against the State steamers and they serve no good purpose whatever.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Would you subsidise the white service boats?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is for the Government to say. I would do anything I could to get rid of black labour on the ships. There is no doubt Western Australia is held in the merciless grip of the meat ring, both by land and by sea. It is the function of the Government to break that ring. In order to properly grip the situation a study of the stock statistics is necessary. The



total number of cattle in Western Australia up to December, 1923, according to the published reports, was 953,764, an increase over the year 1919 of 73,120. The number of cattle in West Kimberley to December, 1923, was 287,282, and to the end of December, 1922, it was 288,410, a decrease of 1,128. The number of cattle in East Kimberley to December, 1923, was 302,318, and to December, 1922, it was 283,992, an increase of 18,326. The cattle position is not good, but it is not unsatisfactory. With regard to the sheep, however, the state of affairs is alarming. The number of sheep in the State to December, 1922, was 6,661,135 and to December, 1923, it was 6,595,867, a decrease of 65,268. The demand for sheep on the part of our farmers and the high price of wool have no doubt led to the present high price of mutton. Whilst these high prices might be reduced slightly if the Government took control of the trucks that take the sheep to market, I do not think much can be done to alter the position for the next 12 months. The figures covering the cattle and sheep shipments to Fremantle from the North-West ports, for 12 months June 30, 1924, will give members some idea how much we depend on the North-West for our meat supplies. The number of cattle shipped from North-West ports up to June 30, of this year show an increase of 2,857, the total number being 14,136. The number of sheep shipped to June 30 this year was 40,478, an increase over 1923 of 7,052. It is then necessary to compare these shipments with the cattle and sheep slaughtered in the metropolitan area, and the various activities of the big men who are connected with the meat ring. I suppose there are no more than six big operators on the meat market and two associated firms, namely, Messrs. Dalgety Ltd. and Elder Smith and Co. These people control the position and have done so since January last. Speeches have been delivered by members concerning the bad management of the Mitchell Government. I consider that their callous action in neglecting the opportunity to control the ring constitutes the biggest impeachment that could be made against them, and cannot be compared with their operations in connection with the group settlements or even sandalwood.

Hon. G. W. Miles: How do you propose to remedy the position?

Hon. J. Ewing: What is wrong with group settlement?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Sir James Mitchell started a new thing when he began group settlements.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They have been in operation in Victoria for many years.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Although it may be very costly in the beginning, like all new things, I think this will pan out all right.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is the most generous statement I have heard from any of your party.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does your Government say that to-day?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am speaking for myself. The statistical department and the agricultural department are possessed of all the data concerning sheep and cattle and everything connected with agriculture. Those departments could remedy the evil, but they sit back and let the big operators work the market as they please. Ever since last January we have been buying beef at twice the price that has been paid in the Eastern States. Recently there appeared a series of articles in the "West Australian" by an American explorer through the Northern Territory, and he mentioned that bullocks were being sold for £12 10s. That has been the average price in Adelaide for the last six months, and in Melbourne and Sydney the price has ranged from £12 upwards. On the other hand we have been paying £29 12s. 6d. in the metropolitan markets. The Government should have stepped in and remedied that position by first of all stopping the exportation of Wyndham beef.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: And break a contract.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: My reason for speaking at this length is to place the seriousness of the meat position before members. One of the first things the Leader of the House did was to handle the meat question. He did this promptly, and was instrumental in consignments of beef being sent from Wyndham, which materially affected the market for a week or two. Unfortunately the bad administration of the late Government effectively prevented people from obtaining cheap meat.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is not correct. Unfortunately, I have no opportunity of replying now, but I am quite prepared to make a statement on the subject.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There is a department specially engaged in collating these figures. They can be used by anybody, and should have been used in the interests of the people by the late Government. Every facility is given to the heads of the different firms to avail themselves of this information. It does not require an expert to handle such figures. If anyone cares to sit down before the statistics he can arrive at the whole position in a very little while. There is no doubt we have been the victims of this merciless ring for at least three years. I have a suggestion to make that should remedy the difficulty. The number of cattle slaughtered in the metropolitan area in 1921 was 23,545, in 1923 it was 23,444, and in 1924 it was 27,057. There were 362,122 sheep slaughtered in the metropolitan area in 1922, 345,784 in 1923, and 278,592 in 1923-4. The number of cattle slaughtered this year showed an increase of 3,613 over 1923. The number of pigs slaughtered this year showed a decrease of 92, and there was a small increase of 130 in the number of calves slaughtered. The number of sheep slaughtered showed a decrease over 1923 of 67,192, and over the



year 1922 a decrease of 83,540. One does not require to be a Rhodes scholar to understand the reason for this, and the need of looking to the North-West for supplies.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: You want to be an athlete to eat some of the beef.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The figures can easily be obtained. The late Government had the staff available and should have taken action. Instead of sending our beef to Belgium at an average price of 3d. per lb. it should have been brought into the metropolitan area, and so reduce the price by about 50 per cent.

Hon. J. Ewing: Then let the Government do it now.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Unfortunately the Government cannot do it immediately, because their hands are tied by the actions of the late Government. The output of the Wyndham Meat Works was sold to the Belgian Government.

Hon. J. Ewing: They have their opportunity this year.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: And they will take it.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Was that not the intention of the Labour Government when they started the Freezing Works?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The first intention was to relieve the metropolitan market.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That was the idea.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: These figures prove that we must look for our meat supplies to the Kimberleys. For the 12 months up to June 30 last, the number of cattle and sheep killed for the metropolis represents a shortage equal to 3,800 head. I would like to stress the point mentioned by Mr. Ewing that we have spent over £1,000,000 on the Wyndham Meat Works. And yet the late Government did not see fit to use the Wyndham meat to relieve the position in the South!

Hon. J. Ewing: You do not understand the position.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let the hon. member proceed.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That was one of the worst features of the trouble. In 1920 the average price for beef in the metropolitan area was 7½d. per lb.; in 1921 it was 5½d. per lb.; in 1922, 5½d. per lb.; in 1923, 5d. per lb.; and during 1924 it has ranged from 7d. to 8¼d. per lb.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are you quoting wholesale prices?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. If hon. members studied the market reports in the Eastern States, they would see that the average prices over a given period represent about half those figures and range from 3½d. to 4d. a lb.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Where does the major portion of the beef for the metropolitan area come from?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: From the Kimberley districts.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And you have not the boat space necessary to bring the meat down! That is the crux of the position.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: We could bring large quantities of beef down by the motor ship "Kangaroo." That vessel has space for 300 tons of frozen beef.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is for chilled, not frozen, beef.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The "Kangaroo" could bring down 300 tons of frozen beef, and 150 tons of chilled beef.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do the people like chilled or frozen beef, or do they demand fresh beef?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Until this year with a combination on the part of the master butchers, who were opposed to frozen meat being utilised, the people showed a strong preference for fresh meat, but now, thanks to the efforts of the Colonial Secretary and his department, that has been changed.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Did not a man get the sack from a Claremont institution for assisting the frozen beef industry?

Hon. E. H. Harris: He has since been reinstated.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That man was sacked for taking frozen beef at the price of fresh beef. He should have been kept out of his position, in my opinion. In 1921, despite the fact that there were no additional ships operating, 20,698 cattle were shipped from the North-West to Fremantle. This year only 14,000 head of cattle have been brought down. There may be some reasonable explanation for this, but I know that on one or two occasions the State steamer "Bambra" has come down the coast empty.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Do not forget that this has been a bad season.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Had there been anything like good management displayed, cattle would have been shipped down to relieve the position. Seeing that the sheep position is so bad—

Hon. G. W. Miles: You cannot expect the sheep grower to sell his sheep while he can get such high prices for wool.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, I do not complain about mutton, but I do claim that we should get cheaper beef. Unless additional shipping facilities are available next season, the Minister will require to bring down 1,000 or 1,200 tons of frozen beef to relieve the position.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is a good idea.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And more live stock should be sent down, too.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In view of the large amount of capital locked up in the Fremantle Meat Works, that concern should be used as a base to keep down prices. I will next deal with the comparison of prices as disclosed by the market reports published from time to time. On the 5th January the London price for frozen beef was 4½d. per lb., while in Perth bullocks were sold at from £23 to £25, and in Melbourne the price for a bullock ranged from £16 to £18. On



the 11th February the Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney market reports disclosed practically equal prices. I have not got the March figures, which I could not find when I was searching the files. On the 29th April the Melbourne prices for fat bullocks were about £13 10s., while in Perth the figure ranged from £22 10s. to £23 10s. I might explain to hon. members that I took these figures haphazard from a file I have in order to show the price of cattle since last January, as disclosed by the market reports dealing with Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. On the 13th May the Melbourne prices for fat bullocks were from £13 to £14 10s. and in Perth, from £21 to £23. On the 10th June the Sydney price for a prime bullock was £12, while in Perth the price obtained was from £23 to £23 10s. On the 22nd July the Perth price was £26 10s., and on the 24th July the Sydney price was from £13 to £13 10s. On the 4th August cattle brought £17 in Sydney, while in Perth the price paid was about £29 12s. 6d. The meat trade is practically in the hands of five men and two selling firms. Despite the fact that to date the Minister for Railways has not seen fit to abolish the present system under which the control of trucking is in the hands of the associated agents, I think that system is wrong in principle. I have endeavoured to ascertain particulars showing actual injustice done to farmers, and although I have none to place before hon. members, I still say that the principle of handing over the people's property to the associated agents who are interested in securing high prices for their clients, is bad.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What is done?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Under the present system, if I desire to send 2,000 sheep to the markets, I can be prevented, practically, from doing so. The firms can write advising that the market is overstocked, and I am blocked from sending the sheep forward. At the present time a farmer must procure trucks from the Westralian Farmers Ltd., who are operating in a small way, from Dalgety's, or from Elder, Smith's. I know that the Minister, too, has been endeavouring to ascertain whether any injustice has been experienced by the farmers.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But cannot you get a truck privately apart from those three firms?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Then that should be altered.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The trouble is that this means the whole of the stock and trucks are handed over to those concerns.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is a scandal.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not necessarily a scandal.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is. Why should three firms have that right?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: This matter was mentioned at the recent Road Board Conference, but delegates seemed to think that it was all right. It is a bad policy to pursue to enable such concerns to impede operations, because it is so easy to rig the market. I hope the Government will decide to control the trucking question departmentally.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The Minister has been in office for three and a half months, but he has allowed this to go on.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I remarked just now that I hoped the Minister would alter the system. Last year 40,000 sheep were trucked down. The mutton market is scarcer and all the available space on the ships trading along the North-West coast has been booked up to November. Actually 45,000 sheep will be shipped down from the North-West and landed at Fremantle before the end of November. If a small pastoralist desires to get space for his sheep he will not be able to get it until next January. When it is realised that the people controlling the position are agents for the steamers, that they operate in stock, that they are big butchers and deal in meat, that they are also interested in big stations up North, and control the railway trucks, hon. members will appreciate the fact that the rigging of the market does not present a big problem to them. It is only to be expected that the butchers whose business it is to get the highest prices possible, will endeavour to secure that end. But I contend that the interests served under this system are those of the employers and not of the State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You must remember that the steamers are different from the railways. You must book ahead whether the ships are State owned or privately owned.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is so, but is it not remarkable that only 40,000 sheep were shipped last year, and yet this year the steamers are all booked up to land 45,000 head before the end of November. It shows that it is in the interests of those concerned to keep up prices. I was pleased to find that the Minister had been dealing with this question, and I believe the Government have grit enough to compel the departmental heads to move, so that we may have better conditions operating next season. It is hopeless to accomplish much this year, but in order to make the position better next year something should be done at once. I understand that the Minister has taken steps in that direction. I will not deal with the financial position, because several excellent speeches have been delivered on that phase. Dealing with the bread-making industry, I am convinced that an investigation is required. We have to-day some 73 master bakers operating in the metropolitan area. There are less than a



dozen big men, so that most of the master bakers are small men. The master bakers are like the big farmers, for the big baker shelters behind the small man, just as the big farmer shelters behind the small farmer when computing his costs of production. The big master bakers in the metropolitan area have not been affected by the rise in the price of flour. If it were possible to go through the metropolitan bakehouses and stores we would find them fully stocked up with flour bought before the rise took place. The dogs were barking in the streets long before flour went up that there was to be a big rise in prices. I do not blame the master bakers for taking advantage of the position; it is their business to do so. If, however, there were a closer understanding between the farmers, the millers, and the Government this infringement of the public interests would not be permitted.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not the farmer; he is never consulted.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: We are to have this year a 20 million bushel harvest, and the local consumption, I understand, will be about two million bushels. I hold that there should be some understanding to secure a standard price for wheat for local consumption. I have heard Mr. W. D. Johnson speak very effectively upon this.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It would mean dear bread.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, it would not. I do not see why we should be subject to these fluctuations in the price of flour that mean so much suffering amongst the consumers.

Hon. A. Lovckin: Is there a way out?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes there is. Apart from this, we have often noticed that the people do not squeal about the cost of production until there is a world scarcity. To-day, whether wheat be dear or cheap, the cost of production and of distribution of bread is altogether too high. We have 73 master bakers in the metropolitan area. We could very well cut out many of them and divide the metropolitan area into zones, thus reducing the cost of distribution by over one halfpenny per loaf. Master bakers tell me that it costs from 1d. to 1½d. per loaf to place bread in the average house. That is scandalous.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Bad debts and booking cost more than that.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The time has arrived when a commission should be appointed to deal with the whole position. We could have expert bakers on it. The majority of master bakers who are doing well at present would welcome any scheme for reducing the cost of distribution.

Hon. J. Duffell: And reducing the price of flour.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is so. The commission could inquire into the cost of the production of flour and of bread, and of the distribution of bread.

Hon. J. Duffell: The master millers have an association.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, they manage their affairs much as do the master butchers; they have a capable organisation. The Fremantle requirements have been placed comprehensively before the House by Mr. Kitson. Down there we want quite a lot of things. At the same time we have live members to see that we get our share of the small amount of money available. Fremantle requires a dock and a new railway. I am not proposing to waste the time of the House putting forward a list of our requirements at present impossible of attainment. I rely on the sense of justice in Ministers to give Fremantle, as every other district, a fair share of improvements when the money is available. However, some things are imperative and must be dealt with apart from considerations of finance. When in Collie the other day, I was surprised that Mr. Ewing, until recently a Minister of the Crown, should have been satisfied with the condition of the Collie hospital. I will never rest until better facilities are provided in Collie for the treatment of sick and injured persons.

Hon. J. Ewing: Your Government say they cannot find the money this year.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am sorry they cannot. Any man who has been at Collie will admit that the existing hospital facilities constitute a reflection on our humanity and civilisation.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is not as bad as that.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, it is. If any health authority were sent down from Perth he would condemn the place. It is a scandal. Collie is the centre of a mining area and is surrounded by hundreds of men at work in the timber industry. My conscience will not allow me to rest until I see better hospital accommodation for the people of Collie and the Collie district. Through living in Claremont and being in close proximity to the Hospital for the Insane, I am interested in that institution. I have spoken on this question in the House before, and hon. members will remember the agitation that was set going by the Returned Soldiers' Association as the result of what I had to say about the inhuman conditions to which returned soldiers were subjected at the asylum. All that was bad enough, but why make a distinction between soldiers and the civil population? The asylum is more like a dungeon than a hospital. Indeed it is a gaol. It is of no use abusing the management. The late Government had plenty of room for improvement. We ought to realise that we are treating patients at the asylum inhumanly, for which of course we, as representatives of the people, must accept our share of responsibility. Drastic alterations are required in the asylum. Seeing, too, that the patients have been drawn from all classes of society, it is high time the Government, indeed all of us, took active steps



to improve the conditions. If it is a scandal and inhuman for returned soldiers to be kept there, it is also inhuman and a scandal for members of the civil population to be kept there. In dealing with this question, we cannot await improvement in the finances, but must get the necessary money where we can. The Old Men's Home is another institution calling for improvement. Personally I would rather go to Fremantle Gaol than to the Old Men's Home. I know both places pretty well.

Hon. J. Cornell: Do you know the gaol from the outside or from the inside?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I know both of them. The Old Men's Home could be made a splendid institution, but the hospital accommodation—I understand there is to be a big alteration effected—is altogether too small. The whole place requires enlargement and the provision of better facilities. I am not exaggerating when I say that for cleanliness, for food and for ordinary conditions of life I would prefer to go to the Fremantle Gaol rather than to the Old Men's Home—provided, of course, I was allowed out when I wished. Of the two institutions, the gaol is by far the better. I am not suggesting any mismanagement at the Old Men's Home, but the place is overcrowded.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Persons put into the Fremantle Gaol have to stop there, whereas the inmates of the Old Men's Home come out, get covered with vermin, and go back and give a lot of trouble.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am speaking of the men in the hospital, men who cannot go out. There is no doctor there.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Old Men's Home is altogether on a wrong basis, and is greatly congested.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Now I want to touch upon infant welfare. Dr. Saw, I expect, will say something about this later. A strong effort is being made to place Western Australia and the metropolitan area on the basis of the other States, where considerable progress has been made in the movement. It is only reasonable to ask the Government to subsidise municipalities in their endeavours to finance infant welfare centres. As compared with New Zealand, our vital statistics are unfavourable. Hundreds of our babes are lost every year through ignorance on the part of mothers, and also through lack of facilities that ought to be provided for all. It is high time the Government gave serious consideration to this question and encouraged the formation of infant welfare centres throughout the State. In conclusion I may say I am proud to be associated with the Labour Government. I realise the difficult task confronting them in consequence of the finances of the State being in a parlous condition, as ably demonstrated by those of my colleagues who have already spoken. However, I believe the Government have quite sufficient ability to successfully tackle

the various problems awaiting them, and that as the result of their efforts the State will progress as never before. I have pleasure in supporting the Address-in-reply.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.57]: Several hon. members have commented on the absence of a guard of honour and Royal salute from the opening of Parliament. I do not intend to pursue that subject, except to say that although no guns were fired at the opening of Parliament, there has been a considerable discharge of heavy cannon in this Chamber during the debate. Especially has it been directed towards the ranks of the defeated enemy by those who, one might say, were the allies of the present Government in assisting to defeat the Nationalist Government. I join with other hon. members in congratulating Mr. Drew on his re-election to the House, and on his again assuming the office of Leader of the Chamber. When in 1915 I first entered the House, Mr. Drew was Leader. So it seems like old times to find him occupying the same seat. Mr. Drew to-day probably realises what a very different House it is from what it was when I entered it. No doubt he is looking forward to an easy task this session. I remember that in 1915 I thought the Minister had a very hard task. I must confess that I did not envy him that task; for, although he had a band of loyal and devoted followers, numerically somewhat small, behind him, and although he had the respect and confidence of all members, yet he was faced by a large majority of somewhat hostile critics politically. To-day the position is entirely different. He still has the same devoted band of followers, somewhat similar in numbers to what he had then, but the composition of the rest of the House is entirely changed. Judging from the speeches of this session and indeed of last session, when they were busily engaged trouncing the Mitchell Government, Mr. Drew has every reason to expect that he will get the support of those members who by their hostile criticism of the National Government undoubtedly assisted in causing the defeat of that Administration. Mr. Kirwan alluded to this when he said that the hostile criticism of this Chamber had driven the late Nationalist Government out of power. I agree with him. I said that at the elections and have continued to say it ever since. But Mr. Kirwan went further. He said that the criticism of Mr. Lovekin and Mr. Holmes—I regret that neither is in his place, because I shall have something to say about Mr. Lovekin at any rate—more than that of the previous Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Collier, had been responsible for turning the late Government out of office. In other words, he said that, whereas Saul had slain his thousands, David in the person of Mr. Lovekin had slain his tens of thousands. You, Sir, who, like myself, were brought up with a very intimate knowledge of Holy Writ, will