

The select committee almost pleaded with the Main Roads Board to utilise the services of the local governing bodies instead of appointing large staffs of officials who did not know the work. This Chamber has heard me on more than one occasion refer to the need for technically trained scientific men; but I say in this connection that men of practical knowledge—men who have spent a lifetime on road work—are also needed. A man from the University who is without practical experience has to acquire that kind of knowledge, but he will acquire it more quickly than an untrained man. Perhaps there have been too many engineers on these roads, and not enough road board foremen and road menders. I believe the result of the outcry which has been raised will be that the Main Roads Board will use the services of the local governing authorities, and that the Federal Government will show themselves more reasonable in regard to specifications and conditions. I trust, too, that the Main Roads Board will benefit by the experience of the past and value more highly the independence which this House, supported by another place, was responsible for giving them. The members of that board have been placed in a position where, if they have sufficient stamina and backbone, they should be able to keep themselves entirely independent of political control.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 9th August, 1928.

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

QUESTION—WHEAT, BULK HANDLING FACILITIES.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Acting Minister for Works: 1, Has any consideration been given in the plans for harbour extension at Fremantle, to the question of bulk handling of grain that is being forced upon this State, and to the consequent need for less wharf frontage for handling of wheat in bulk than in bags? 2, Is he aware that the Director of Agriculture has stated repeatedly: "When we have to handle 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, bulk handling will be forced upon this country, as it will be impossible to handle it otherwise? 3, As indications point to the centennial objective of a 50,000,000-bushel crop being attained, before any further action is taken regarding the Fremantle harbour extension, will he go into this matter with the Engineer-in-Chief, with a view to altering the plans to provide for bulk handling, if necessary?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. On the 9th July, Cabinet instructed that the Director of Agriculture, the Secretary, Fremantle Harbour Trust, and the Engineer-in-Chief jointly should consider and report on the question of bulk-handling of wheat. That committee are now investigating all aspects of the question. The possibility of future bulk handling of wheat on the north side of Fremantle Harbour was in view when the recent scheme for future harbour extensions at Fremantle was put up and the general scheme was designed accordingly. 2, No. 3, There is no need to alter plans which were originally based on the necessity of making provision for possible future bulk handling.

QUESTION—STATE ADVERTISING IN BRITAIN.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: 1, Is it correct as stated by returned travellers from Great Britain, that "the system of advertising Western Australia in the Homeland in conjunction with the combined States is not at all effective from a Western Australian point of view"? 2, If so, cannot steps be taken to advertise Western Australia independently of the other States?

The PREMIER replied: In the absence of advice as to the number and status of the returned travellers who made the statement alleged in question 1, I cannot determine

whether independent advertising should be undertaken as suggested by question 2.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.39]: I do not think that the speeches of the Leader of the Opposition and of the Leader of the Country Party require that I should speak at any great length in reply. I wish to refer at the outset to one or two questions that were dealt with by the latter. Commenting upon the land settlement scheme east of the Great Southern Railway, the hon. member was concerned as to whether the port of Albany would be properly treated with respect to the railways to be constructed to serve that area. I think he expressed his doubts in that regard because some time ago a statement appeared in the Press purporting to give particulars of the routes of the several railways that will have to be constructed in that area. That statement was entirely unauthorised and, as a matter of fact, the question of railway routes there has not yet been considered at all in any definite or final way. The hon. member, and other members of the House as well, can rest assured that when the recommendations of the Railway Advisory Board are finally presented to the Government, it will be only after the most careful, exhaustive, and thorough investigation of the country. Even then, if it should appear to those who represent ports in the southern portions of the State that all the railways they would like to see leading into those particular centres are not to be constructed as they would wish, those hon. members must remember always that the object of constructing railways is to serve the people who are settled on the land in certain localities, rather than to serve particular ports. I think it will be found that the scheme of railway construction that will be proposed, will be the best to conserve the future interests in the districts throughout that great area. I agree entirely with the suggestion of the Leader of the Country Party that our own Western Australian people should receive preference when the allotments are made of land in that area, or in any other part of the State, where Crown lands may yet be available. It is true that quite a number of people have come in recent months from the

Eastern States, particularly from South Australia and Victoria, and that they are still coming over each week, with the object of securing farms in this State. While it has been stated by hon. members that we should welcome those people as citizens, it will be conceded that our own Western Australians, particularly the young Western Australians of the present generation, a considerable number of whom have been brought up on the farms of their fathers, are entitled to first consideration. I think the policy of the Land Board is in the direction of giving preference to Western Australians.

Mr. Mann: Have the members of that board been instructed to give that preference?

Hon. G. Taylor: They would not be instructed!

The PREMIER: I do not know that we could instruct them, but I think the policy of the Government and of Parliament is known to the members of the board. By way of interjection last night, the Minister for Lands stated that 90 per cent. of the blocks already allotted had gone to Western Australians. Then again the hon. member was concerned regarding the Fremantle harbour. The work contemplated there will be of considerable magnitude and of very great expense. Naturally every member of the House and of the public, too, is entitled to examine and analyse the proposals, both for and against, the schemes outlined by the Engineer in Chief and by Sir George Buchanan. I can only say that although there was discussion on the subject last year—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There was no proposal.

The PREMIER: There was not a definite voting of money. What was done indicated the decision of the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You did not adopt any scheme.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member looks up the reports of the debates, I think he will find that the Minister for Works stated that the Government had accepted the scheme of the Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. Mann: He hardly said that. He said it would be submitted to this House.

The PREMIER: The action taken regarding land resumptions is part of the scheme, because the bridge over the river and the railway are involved in the scheme of the Engineer-in-Chief.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We distinctly understood that we were not committing ourselves to anything definite.

The PREMIER: Of course. I was about to add that the House will be consulted. The House has a right to say whether the scheme shall be adopted.

Hon. G. Taylor: That vote did not commit us to any particular scheme.

The PREMIER: No, the vote was for £5,000 for boring to test the possibility of foundations in the river. That work is only just about complete and nothing more will be done until the House has been consulted.

Hon. G. Taylor: It was merely preparatory work.

The PREMIER: I should have no objection to a further examination of the whole question of harbour construction, but I am not able to see that any good purpose would be served, or where we are to get any authority greater than those who have already pronounced judgment on the matter.

Mr. Mann: It was done in connection with the metropolitan water supply.

The PREMIER: This scheme has been examined very carefully and two eminent engineers in this branch of the profession have expressed opinions on the matter.

Mr. Mann: Which are quite opposite.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Mann: That surely calls for further inquiry.

The PREMIER: Is it suggested that we should derive benefit from submitting the views of those engineers to a select committee, a Royal Commission, or any body of laymen?

Mr. Mann: No.

Hon. G. Taylor: It would be no good at all.

The PREMIER: It would be utterly absurd.

Mr. Mann: You could do what you did about the metropolitan water supply, namely, bring an export from Victoria.

The PREMIER: I do not know whether we can get an expert of any greater standing than the two men who have already reported on the question.

Hon. G. Taylor: The point is they disagree.

Mr. Corboy: The point is that either scheme is good and feasible.

The PREMIER: Either scheme is possible and feasible. The question is which scheme

will give the greater efficiency at the least cost.

Hon. G. Taylor: And meet requirements.

The PREMIER: That is so. The House will have an opportunity to discuss the whole question within the next few months.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no one here with sufficient knowledge to decide between the two schemes.

The PREMIER: Not in Australia.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not in this House.

The PREMIER: Nor in Australia, so far as I can ascertain.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would not say that.

The PREMIER: I mean there are not greater authorities in Australia than the two who have already dealt with the matter. I do not propose to go further into the question to-day. It is one that will require very full consideration and discussion before any money is expended upon it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a big question.

The PREMIER: In one sense it is a good thing for the State that work of this kind is required. The need for greater shipping facilities indicates the growth and development of the State. The expenditure involved in any scheme, in addition to the ordinary annual expenditure of loan money, will be the cause of considerable worry to the Treasurer for years to come.

Mr. Teesdale: Has there been any pronounced congestion with the present harbour facilities?

The PREMIER: I believe there is congestion at present, but to carry out any scheme of harbour extension will entail years of work. We must look years ahead, and I believe it is beyond doubt that the existing harbour will not carry the trade that will come to it in the years immediately before us.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is unless you start making preparations at once.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If you started to-morrow, you could not get the accommodation provided soon enough.

The PREMIER: That is so. The Leader of the Opposition began his remarks by expressing great displeasure at the Governor's Speech.

Hon. G. Taylor: What else would you expect.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was justified in doing so.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition was not only angry with its tone and composition, but was almost offensive in his references to it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was only sympathising with the member for Coolgardie in the difficulty that confronted him when he moved the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

The PREMIER: The hon. member said the whole programme indicated that the Government ought to resign. That is a sentiment that might be entertained by any Opposition Leader upon all the Speeches put forward by the Government. To use an original phrase, the time is always ripe for the Government to resign, that is from the Opposition point of view. He said something constructive might have been expected. I think I have heard that phrase before; in fact, I might have used somewhat similar terms during the years I was in Opposition.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You were not justified in doing so.

The PREMIER: With the Opposition, there is never anything constructive in the Governor's Speech. The hon member said it might have been taken from a monthly statement by the publicity officer. I have not had time to read all the monthly statements of the publicity officer.

Mr. Griffiths: They are worth reading.

The PREMIER: I agree with that. If they are somewhat on the lines of this Speech, the work of the publicity officer for Western Australia is very good indeed.

Mr. Griffiths: Undoubtedly it is.

The PREMIER: The hon. member said further that the Speech was a sham—that is where he got angry—and did not represent what the Government really thought. I am prepared to admit that the Speech did not represent all that the Government think about some things. It would not be judicious for the Government to put into the Speech all that they thought—

Hon. G. Taylor: Especially about the Opposition.

The PREMIER: I was about to add those words. The Leader of the Opposition said the Speech dealt with what Ministers had done and that it was an overdose of egotism. I have read the Speech again,

although I had read it many times during the course of its composition.

Mr. Mann: Surely you are not going to read it again now!

The PREMIER: I consider it to be one of the most modest Speeches that has been presented to Parliament for many years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We shall have a Royal Commission on the question.

The PREMIER: I fail to see that any part of it deals with what Ministers have done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then let us take it clause by clause.

The PREMIER: Also, I fail to see that it bears any indications of egotism. The Speech is a plain, straightforward statement of the State's progress during the past 12 months. It must be remembered that the Governor's Speech is circulated beyond the confines of Western Australia. It goes to other States and to other countries, and I think it a good thing that people who are not here and have not opportunities to learn how the State is advancing from year to year should be made acquainted with those facts through the medium of the Governor's Speech. Let members turn to the paragraph dealing with finance and they must agree it contains nothing but a mere statement of receipts and expenditure for the year. Is there anything in it that can be construed into egotism or a narration of what Ministers have done? Under the heading of wheat production we say that the yield for the year was 35 million bushels, which was 5 million bushels greater than in the preceding year. That is something which should be made known. In merely showing the progress made by the agricultural areas during the year, there was no attempt to boost Ministers or to claim credit for having been responsible for the whole of the increase. Then, in a modest line and a half under the heading "Pastoral development," we state that the number of sheep increased during the year by one million head. Is there anything wrong in letting the world know that our sheep have increased by a million in a year? Is there anything in that brief paragraph indicating a desire to boost ourselves? When we say in another paragraph that 2,145,000 acres of agricultural land and 11,000,000 acres of pastoral land were allotted during the year, can anyone take exception to it? Where is there any trace of egotism in a statement of that

kind? Coming to the paragraph headed "Agricultural water supplies," we have compressed into the fewest words possible the fact that extensive operations for the provision of water supplies in agricultural districts were carried out during the year. I venture to say that had the Government, of which the hon. member was head, done so much in the way of providing agricultural water supplies, it would have been announced in a paragraph running into not a line and a half, but half a page. Despite all the years he was in office and all the talk of the construction of what was known as key dams—references to which figured in every policy speech for years—it remained for the present Government to commence the work. Since we have been in office a great deal has been accomplished to provide for the first time in the history of this State, water supplies of this particular kind.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Hardly that.

The PREMIER: I am referring to the kind known as key dams. Those water supplies have received bare mention, and neither the name of a Minister nor reference to the Government figures in it. I do not know whether the hon. member had that paragraph in mind when he spoke of the Speech containing nothing but what Ministers had done. Turning to the paragraph headed "Mining," to say there has been a revival in the goldmining industry—again the Minister is not mentioned—is merely to state a plain fact and one that is a very good thing for the State. If we turn to the railways, we find that all the operations of that department are stated in a mere 4½ lines in the Speech. The fact that we have added 40 per cent. to the power of our electric power house during the past three years at a cost of over a quarter of a million pounds is confined to 3½ lines. Road construction, which involved an expenditure, both State and Federal, of more than £600,000 during the year is dealt with in four lines. A very important work, although it is not thoroughly appreciated by a vast number of people, is disclosed in the statement that during the year considerable areas of our timber country have been dedicated as State forests. This is set forth in three lines. It is an important step in the preservation of our forests, and ensures the future supply of hardwoods for the people of this country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That land has been held up for many years.

The PREMIER: Since this State was founded.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: For forests.

The PREMIER: But not dedicated. Every year it has been said to have been held up, but it has been nibbled away. It has been like the cheese with the rat always at it; the cheese has been disappearing rapidly. Considerable areas of our timber country will now be preserved through all time, whereas they were being given over to other purposes.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You do not really mean that.

The PREMIER: Yes. Although the land may be held up, presumably for forest purposes, so long as it is not dedicated it is within the power of any Minister or Government to whittle it away for other purposes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have been Minister over a period of nine years since the Act was introduced.

The PREMIER: The hon. member now forces me to say something I did not want to say, because it might be construed as adding to the overdose of egotism. I am the man who is responsible for our having a forest policy at all in this country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I say so.

The PREMIER: When I took over the Forests Department, as a member of the Scaddan Government, there had been for a period of 15 years in this State no conservator of forests. The head of the department was an acting official who had been a clerk in the department. He had been acting for 15 years, and had no knowledge or experience of forest work. I took the matter in hand and advertised all over the British Empire for a forester, with the result that for the first time in the history of the State, after the appointment of that forester, a definite policy for the preservation of our forests was launched.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You missed the point. I say the forests have been preserved since that time.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The present Conservator is learning his job now.

Mr. Mann: He is a very capable young fellow.

The PREMIER: Even then it was late. Our forests for generations had been slaughtered.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I agree.

The PREMIER: They had been butchered without any regard to the future. It was only when we had a trained forester placed in charge, followed up by a Forests Act, that the position was changed.

Hon. G. Taylor: Was not the Act passed first?

The PREMIER: The Act was passed by the late Mr. R. T. Robinson, shortly after we went out of office.

Hon. G. Taylor: That gave greater power.

The PREMIER: There is the Speech. I have taken the trouble to look up some of the Governor's Speeches delivered during the time when the Leader of the Opposition was Premier. Throughout the Speech delivered this session Ministers are not mentioned. I do not figure in it once. My position is not referred to in the whole Speech. In contrast to that, let me make a brief quotation from the Governor's Speech of 1922, when it said—

The recess has been devoted to the preparation of a comprehensive policy of migration, the details of which will be submitted for your consideration. Following upon the initiation of this policy the Hon. the Premier visited Melbourne early in the year, and placed certain proposals before the Right Hon. the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. These proposals were accepted by Mr. Hughes, and Sir James Mitchell then proceeded to London to seek the co-operation of the Imperial Government. In that mission also he was entirely successful, and before he left London on his return journey a Bill was passed through both Houses of the Imperial Parliament authorising His Majesty's Government to render assistance in a policy of migration within the Empire, and an agreement was completed under which Western Australia will be the first country in the Empire to secure the advantages of that legislation.

Hon. G. Taylor: That was great work.

Mr. Mann: That was stated without comment.

The PREMIER: Even though that may be correct, it savours much more of an overdose of egotism than anything contained in the Speech delivered at the opening of the present session. The hon. member claimed that he was entirely successful, and was responsible for the British Parliament passing that particular Act. I could have mentioned some of the things I have done, but they are not to be found in the Speech, or anything at all to which the description of an overdose of egotism could apply to the same degree as it applies in the Speech I have referred to, and others of the same kind.

Mr. Teesdale: The Press complained that you did not say enough about what you were going to do, and that we all knew what you had done.

The PREMIER: Like the late Lord Forrest, I do not take a hurdle until I get to it. The Leader of the Opposition complained that we had not indicated any of our new railways that might be constructed. I have searched the Governor's Speeches in years past, and have failed to find one which contained any reference to new railways. There is also a complaint that very few Bills are indicated for the work of this session. That complaint was made by the hon. member. If it would be of any value or assistance, the Speech might be padded out to show a list of the Bills to come forward, but in my opinion that would serve no good purpose. I find in the Speech of 1922 that only four Bills were mentioned, and they were not of outstanding importance either, namely the Licensing Bill, the Hospitals Bill, the Closer Settlement Bill and the Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill. That was the only legislative programme mentioned in the Speech of 1922. In 1923 only six Bills were mentioned, the Redistribution of Seats, the Friendly Societies Act Amendment, the Law of Property and Conveyancing Bill, the Licensing of Firearms, the Anzac Day Better Observance Bill, and the Road Districts Bill. Our programme contains quite as many as that, and they are of equal importance.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No!

The PREMIER: At least nine Bills are mentioned in this Speech, as against the four or six in the Speeches I have referred to. They are indeed greater in number and are certainly not less important. The hon. member asked whether the Government would reduce taxation and railway freights. I cannot say, but it is perhaps worth while mentioning that since we have been in office we have reduced taxation, certainly by the aid of Commonwealth grants to some extent, but not entirely. As hon. members know, income tax has been reduced by nearly 50 per cent. during the past four years, 15 per cent. of which was from our own revenue without any Commonwealth aid whatever. Whilst we may not be able to reduce freights, I may be pardoned for mentioning that the Government of whom the hon. member was head actually increased freights.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not without increasing wages.

The PREMIER: They increased freights very considerably, to the extent of £250,000 a year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: To meet the increased wages.

The PREMIER: Every year brings with it increased financial responsibilities for the railways and other departments. If the figures which have so often been quoted by some members of the House as to the cost to the railway system of granting the 44-hour week and long service leave, are correct, the Government, on the same basis as that put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, might have been justified in increasing freights, but we have been able to make these concessions, or grant these rights to the employees of the State, and still not involve the railway system in a loss for the year. The Leader of the Opposition said there were very few railways under construction. He is not correct there.

The Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There are three, are there not?

The PREMIER: The hon. member said there were a few, but there are three.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I know.

The PREMIER: I do not know that there ever has been in the history of the State any period when there has been a greater number than three under construction at the same time.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: There is a lot of anxiety as to when the others are going to be constructed.

The PREMIER: Of course there is anxiety. This would not be the first time in the history of the State when districts have had to wait long years after the passing of the Bills before their railways are constructed.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is so.

The PREMIER: We have many years yet to come before reaching a record in that respect.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You built one good one, at any rate.

The PREMIER: I do not know whether it was good or not. It was one that had been authorised for 14 years.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What about the line in my district?

The PREMIER: The hon. member is concerned about the railway which we authorised the session before last. I received a deputation from the district asking for the railway, and was told they had been to every Premier, commencing with the late Sir John Forrest, asking for that railway, and

it had failed to secure authorisation. Now it is less than two years since the Bill was passed, and they ought not to be too restless.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The Advisory Board states that it could settle 2,500 people there.

The PREMIER: The Advisory Board could have told previous Governments that many years ago, but apparently it failed to influence them. This Government will build their authorised railways in time, as opportunity and money permit.

Mr. Griffiths: Even the Yarramony railway.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will undertake to refrain from asking questions. Every time he asks a question about that railway, he postpones the date of its commencement for 12 months. I say that in order that his electors will know where to place the blame and responsibility should the construction be unduly delayed. Indeed, if he does not keep quiet about it I shall start the Cranbrook line before his railway. The Leader of the Opposition further said, referring to the profit for the year of £26,000, that the railways were drifting. Certainly the profit is a reduction upon that of a few years ago, but the fall does not justify the description of our railway system as drifting, especially when we have regard to the fact that every other railway system in Australia is showing a huge loss. In some of the States that loss is more than £1,000,000 a year. The losses on their railway systems are entirely responsible for the large deficits those States are showing. We have also to bear in mind that our railway employees are as well situated in regard to hours and pay as are those of any system in Australia.

Mr. Kenneally: Except as regard superannuation; our railway employees do not get that.

The PREMIER: I do not know that the railway employees of all the other States get it. Further, regard must be paid to the fact that we have incomparably a greater mileage of railway per head of population than any other State of the Commonwealth, or indeed any other country in the world. It is worth saying that no country in the world has so large a mileage of railway per head of population as Western Australia has. There is also the fact that in this State a great proportion of the railway mileage is laid in new territory, which is being settled year by year but the returns from which can only become substantial as the years go on and development takes place. In comparing

our railway position with that of a State like Victoria or perhaps New South Wales, we must not lose sight of the fact that the railway systems of those States serve districts which have been settled for generations and have reached their full productive capacity, therefore giving ample traffic to the lines as against our comparatively limited tonnage. Then there is the considerable mileage of goldfields railways.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The railways serve the purpose in that case also. We knew it would come.

The PREMIER: The lines are there, while the traffic has fallen off very considerably; in fact, traffic may be said not to exist on the return journey. Having regard to all these facts we may well say that our railway system, judged by figures and results, is far and away the best system in Australia to-day.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: By miles the best.

The PREMIER: Naturally, considerable expenditure is involved owing to the mileage being added to year by year. Much money has to be spent in providing rolling stock and other requirements. However, it is a great achievement to find ourselves on the right side after paying all working expenses and interest, even if the whole of the sinking fund charges are not covered. The figures given in the Governor's Speech with regard to expenditure on roads, which the Leader of the Opposition did not find quite explicit, show that the State's proportion of the Federal aid roads grant for last year—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then we spent all that money?

The PREMIER: No. Our proportion of the expenditure under the Federal aid roads scheme was £125,000. Then on group roads we spent £116,000 of the cheaper money. Other State expenditure on roads amounted to £160,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, but the figures hardly total right. I thought we had spent £380,000 in all.

The PREMIER: I think the figures total correctly. They show the total spent during the year as £497,000. In addition to that there was the Federal contribution for the year, £187,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We did not use the £380,000.

The PREMIER: No; nothing near it. I will give the figures directly.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I did not know that.

The PREMIER: The Federal contribution for the year was £167,000, making a total expenditure, State and Federal, for the year of £640,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I thought we were entitled to use, and should have used, more than that.

The PREMIER: We were unable to use all the money that was available. It is interesting, too, to note that our contribution, although on a basis of 15s. to the Commonwealth pound, was raised to 18s. 6d. to the Commonwealth pound by cost of supervision and administration, which was wholly borne by the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I thought the State got 2 per cent. for that.

The PREMIER: Even so, our contribution amounted to 18s. 6d. to the Commonwealth pound. The expenditure last year was much less than the amount that could have been expended, and that remark also applies to the preceding year. In fact, since the initiation of the scheme we have not spent the full amount in any year. Last year there was a considerable falling off for the reason that when the Federal Government insisted upon the change-over from day work to contract work we were not in a position to go ahead, not having the necessary drafting staff for the preparation of plans and specifications. So there was a big gap owing to the change-over.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When the agreement was modified, could you draw for the whole length of a road, or had you to complete a bit before drawing?

The PREMIER: I think it was a matter of completing a bit before we drew. My experience of this Federal aid roads scheme has been such that I feel I would never again enter into an agreement of this kind with any Federal authority.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would not enter into any agreement.

The PREMIER: Certainly not an agreement of this description, where the expenditure of money is concerned. The matter should have been regarded as a partnership to which the partners contributed practically equal amounts, and where each partner should have a say as to the manner in which the work was to be done and the money to be expended. In this case, however, the Federal Government dictate entirely as to how, where, and when the money

shall be expended—not only as regards their own contribution, but as regards our money also.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is all laid down in the agreement, is it not?

The PREMIER: Yes, it is laid down in the agreement, but the agreement is one of that sort which, if not interpreted elastically, becomes irksome and burdensome. In this connection I shall not touch upon the relative merits of day work and contract work. I do not wish to enter into that question at all. But the Federal Government now insist upon every piece of work being advertised as open for tender.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That, of course, is in accordance with the agreement.

The PREMIER: Yes, but this is how it works out in Western Australia. There may be a small patch of bad road in a long stretch of good road.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will not the Federal Government let you do that in your own way?

The PREMIER: I will tell the hon. member what they do. The repair of that patch of bad road may involve an expenditure of only £400 or £500, perhaps a week's or a fortnight's work. Public tenders have to be called for that work by advertisement, the result being that before we can advertise for tenders we must supply specifications. Therefore the road has to be examined by an engineer, levels have to be taken and brought back and worked out in the office, and specifications have to be put up.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Surely not?

The PREMIER: It is so. Then the work is advertised in the newspapers for a certain time, the final result being that some of these small jobs of £400 or £500 have cost, before the date of closing of tenders, more than the total value of the work, in the way of professional engineers examining the road, drawing up specifications, and so forth. Such is, in many cases, the result because in outlying portions of the State there are no road contractors, and so no tender is received. Thereupon I have to sign a letter to the Commonwealth Minister for Public Works advising him of the position and asking may we do the repairs by day work. It has been pointed out to the Commonwealth authorities that in many parts of Western Australia there are no road contractors who would take work of this kind except the local governing authority, who usually do such work. It has been suggested to the Federal Government that in

order to avoid waste of time and money in calling tenders we should arrange with the local governing body for a price; that is to say, the Main Roads Board would estimate the value of the work and then say to the local body, "We think that work is worth £500; will you take it for that?" If the local body were willing, they could then do the work as a contract. If it cost more than the amount estimated, the local body would lose. However, the Commonwealth would not agree to that, and therefore public tenders have to be called when the Main Roads Board know perfectly well that to do so is a waste of time and a waste of money. Such a course might be perfectly justified where the work ran into several thousands of pounds, but where the amount is only a few hundred pounds it is a different matter. Therefore I consider that no matter how strongly the Federal Government may feel in favour of contract as against day work, still, in this State with its vast distances and its lack of contractors in outlying localities some discretion and elasticity ought to exist in the interpretation of the agreement. For my part, as regards road construction I should prefer to say, "Here is our contribution, here is the money we can find for the year, £100,000 or £200,000 or £300,000; we will do work to that extent and will do it in our own way, do it to please ourselves, without all the hampering conditions attached to the Federal scheme, and the Federal Government can keep their money."

Mr. J. H. Smith: But was that position created on account of what you did in January of last year, when you sent out a thousand men?

The PREMIER: No; because right from the commencement of the scheme up to that stage all the work had been done by day work, with the consent of the Federal Government. That was so until that point arose. But when elections were approaching and some of the Federal members for Western Australia, wanting to make political capital, raised the matter in the Commonwealth Parliament, the Federal Government were forced to change their policy. That would never have taken place but for the fact that an election was at hand. Those Federal members may think they acted in pursuance of a belief that contract is preferable to day work, but they rendered the State they represent a great disservice by their action on that occasion. I have described what has resulted from the action in question, and

that sort of thing is going on to-day. For my part, I am thoroughly and heartily sick of it, and will have nothing to do with future agreements of the same kind.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If you started a road from here to Bunbury, could you only get paid for the completed work?

The PREMIER: That is so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Suppose you were doing 10 miles in 50 miles, what then?

The PREMIER: We are paid for whatever we do.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You could not spend money on the 40 miles?

The PREMIER: Not except with the approval of the Commonwealth. On, say, a road from here to Bunbury, there is a five-mile stretch that is bad and in urgent need of making. A contract is then put up by the Main Roads Board in order to get it done, and that is paid for.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is only work that you are actually going to complete that you are allowed to touch, and the rest of the road must go to pieces?

The PREMIER: Yes. I may have something to say about that later. The Leader of the Opposition asked for certain information on the Supply Bill, which, at the moment, I was not able to give him. I have got out some points in regard to it, and I have them here now. He remarked that under the special Acts, apparently we have £170,000 less than we had last year. Presumably he means the Loan Acts. Expenditure under the Loan Acts, by way of interest and sinking fund for 1926-27, was £3,295,039, whereas last year it was £3,178,984, so there was £116,055 less. That was the point to which the hon. member drew attention. It was less because it was due to suspending the charge under that heading of interest and sinking fund on the stock in the hands of the trustees. A similar deduction was made in 1926-27, but for the basis of comparison that must be allowed for. The deduction for 1926-27 was only for a half-year, whereas last year it was for a full year. The interest on new money was £154,000. The London loan was floated late in the financial year, as the hon. member knows, and so not much interest would come into that financial year. But the interest on our overdrafts is not charged to special Acts, but to Miscellaneous. Interest charged on the overdraft up to the time the loan was floated was under the heading of "Miscellaneous." Saving in this division was balanced by the transfer to suspense ac-

count of £350,000 shown in item "Miscellaneous."

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We cannot dissect that.

The PREMIER: No, but it was clear in the Estimates of last year and will be made clear again this year. The full information is difficult to discover from the published returns as they appear in the newspapers at the end of the year. Another point raised by the hon. member was the interest and departmental charges under the trading concerns. Last year, he said, the interest was £38,000, whereas this year it was £96,000. That was an error in the published return. The figures were upside down. The £38,000 was where the £96,000 should be. The figures showed the amount of interest collected on the trading concerns for the previous year, and the returns, both interest and departmental charges, were reversed. The actual figures were the opposite way about.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Last year should have been £63,000 and this year £69,000.

The PREMIER: The correct figures were, balance as transferred £38,000 in 1926 and £31,000 in 1927, nearly the same. The hon. member could not understand the discrepancy in the figures for last year, as against the preceding year. It was an error in the printing. In the previous year the interest was £129,000, and this year it was £96,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then the Wyndham Meat Works was not charged.

The PREMIER: No. The only charge made against the Wyndham Meat Works is profits above working expenses. Last year that amounted to £6,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is satisfactory.

The PREMIER: That was taken into revenue as against the interest. The interest chargeable to Wyndham Meat Works for the year is £74,000. That has been the system for many years past. Whatever profits the Works show, is taken in as against the interest standing. Last year it was £6,000, and in the previous year it was £16,000. But of course there is a big debit in the books, for the interest charged against the Works is about £74,000. The land improvement loan fund shows an alteration of £15,000, it is true, but of course revenue benefited by the non-payment of that amount. By the amendment made by the Legislative Council in the Financial Agreement Bill, the provisions of the Land Improvement Loan Fund Act were suspended until Part III. of the agreement came into force. Con-

sequently there was no contribution to that fund. I do not think it has ever fulfilled its purpose, because under the Act very much more than £15,000 would have to be paid to comply with the provisions of the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not over the term of the loan.

The PREMIER: But each year we have to pay one-twentieth. That is the amount prescribed in the Act. That has never been paid, but a fixed sum of £15,000 has been paid, whereas I think the obligation under the Act would run into about £40,000. The principle is the same, and the whole of the loan is covered by sinking fund, and so I do not think it was necessary to continue paying to that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then you have the Sale of Government Property Trust Account.

The PREMIER: I do not know that the State has always used the Sale of Government Property Trust Account for loan works.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, it has not.

The PREMIER: It has really been a relief to revenue in some respects. In regard to income tax, I am still convinced that I made a bad deal in reducing the taxation by one-third. This rebate of $33\frac{1}{3}$ was based on the previous year, 1925-26, plus the expected annual increase in the field of income tax. For years past our receipts from income tax have been ever-increasing. Naturally that ought to be so. As the State grows and expands, and as its population increases and its wealth production enlarges, so should the receipts from income tax naturally and automatically increase. The return from income tax for 1925-26 was £566,000. The return for 1926-27 was £345,000, plus the £200,000 from the Commonwealth, bringing it up to £545,000, which was £20,000 less than in the previous year. It was actually £20,000 less, not taking into account any natural increase that we might have expected and were justified in expecting by all the results of past years. It is not so many years back when our returns from income taxation were well under £200,000, although the rate of tax was the same as it is now. The return from income taxation in 1927-28 was only £323,000. If we again add the £200,000 from the Commonwealth, it gives a total of £523,000. That was for last year. With the £200,000 from

the Commonwealth, we had a total of £523,000, as against £566,000 three years ago.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the Commonwealth £200,000 is worth £38,000 more than one-half of £263,000.

The PREMIER: But the fact is that after taking in the £200,000, the amount of the tax is only equal to that which we received five years ago.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, no.

The PREMIER: Will anybody contend that the total receipts from the tax during the last five years have not naturally increased?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Would you give the taxpayers the £200,000 instead of the one-third reduction, and take the £161,000 in lieu of it?

The PREMIER: My word I would. I should be glad to exchange the £200,000 for the $33\frac{1}{3}$ reduction, for I would profit by about £50,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, you would lose £38,000.

The PREMIER: No fear! I wish I could make that exchange with the taxpayers: let them pay their $33\frac{1}{3}$ and I distribute the £200,000 from the Commonwealth amongst them. I would gain £50,000.

Mr. Mann: Your figures do not show it.

The PREMIER: Yes, they do. The hon. member said I actually received £340,000 less from the disabilities grant. It may have appeared that way in the returns published in the Press.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, you made a statement to the Press in which you said £344,000 was received.

The PREMIER: I did not notice that. I thought the hon. member took it from the figures he had in his hand when he made that statement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was your statement I had in my hand. You omitted to note the £365,000 received in 1926, and which became a cross-entry in 1927.

The PREMIER: Two years of disabilities grants were distributed in one year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And £365,000 would be a cross-entry.

The PREMIER: The hon. member also said that the ascertained losses on soldier settlement should be written off against the sum held by the Treasurer on the day they are written off for the Agricultural Bank. That is done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Auditor-General says it is not.

The PREMIER: Well, if he says that, he is wrong. The bank does not pay the Treasury interest that it cannot recover. If it should do that, we would have to refund it. The bank pays only on the amount it can recover. It would be wrong to make the bank pay otherwise. Ever since we have been in this House, the Auditor-General's report could be quoted against every Government and every Act. He merely draws attention to technicalities, to non-compliance with certain Acts. Take for instance, the £200,000 set aside from the disabilities grant to meet the impounded deficit. He said that was not devoted to the purpose set out in the Estimates as authorised by the House. The sum of £157,000 of that grant has been used to clear off the unfunded deficit, and there is £42,000 in suspense to be used as required.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It will still be devoted to that purpose.

The PREMIER: Yes. With regard to the entertainments tax, the hon. member thought that it was taken into revenue. That was not done. No portion of the entertainments tax has been taken into revenue. Each year the receipts from the entertainments tax are voted by the House, and it is shown how they are allocated. The amount is spent in conformity with the vote of the House. I have a sheet here which shows how it was expended last year and of course the revenue did not benefit by it at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It should go straight into revenue.

The PREMIER: By including it in the total vote, we know where it is going and how it is expended, and we have some check on the Health Department as to where the amount goes. The revenue does not benefit in any way by it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do not you think it should go straight into revenue?

The Minister for Health: It is better the way it is.

The PREMIER: It makes no difference. In this way we are enabled to keep a better check upon the detailed expenditure of the sum.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have a good many of these taxes—the vermin tax and petrol tax as well. Confusion may be caused.

The PREMIER: The system adopted enables the House to know how the money was expended. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that we had spent a million a year more than in former years, over a period of four years. That is true, but as the hon. member knows, there has been considerable expenditure under groups which did not occur in the whole of the previous four years. As a matter of fact, the expenditure on groups alone in the past four years—I have not taken out the actual figures—has been in the vicinity of 1½ millions a year. The hon. member knows that that amount has been provided and it is what one might describe as new and additional expenditure. The hon. member himself stated that up to the time he left office the total expenditure on groups was £1,050,000. At the present time, it is up to about £6,000,000. That has been a heavy drain upon loan expenditure. I do not propose to go into the question of groups to-night because the Minister for Lands intends to make a full statement on the position next week. I need only say, as members are aware, that the total has been considerably reduced. The settlers sent to the groups altogether number 4,344, and there are to-day 1,766 holdings. These figures will indicate that of the 4,344 settlers sent to the groups, 2,578 have left. That has been a factor in the unemployed difficulty that we have experienced lately.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If they just change places, that does not mean an increase in the number of unemployed..

The PREMIER: As settlers were leaving the groups, vacancies were created and we were bringing others from Home to fill those vacancies. We were not putting on people who were already in the State. The fact that these settlers were leaving the groups was responsible for our bringing others to the State, others who otherwise would not have been brought out. They were brought out for the purpose of filling the vacancies. Again, a percentage of those left the groups and others were brought out to fill the vacancies once more.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are the original ones still unemployed?

The PREMIER: Yes, but it is interesting to know that scarcely a week passes without my receiving letters from those who have left the groups asking to be permitted to return to them. Those people admit having

made a mistake. Only last week a woman told me that she now realised she was never better off in her life than when she and her husband were on a group holding. She said she had made a mistake and added, "My husband liked the city and he wanted to leave his holding." She stated that her husband had now got clearing work beyond Newdegata, and she asked for assistance to go out and join him. Her intention was to take her two children and live in a couple of tents where the husband was at work. Her husband went to this job recently with a number of unemployed. She reiterated that they had made the greatest mistake in their lives by coming to the city and now realised how well off they were on their holding. Those people left their holding through want of a proper appreciation of the possibilities that lay before them. The counter-attraction of the city and the high wages prevailing induced them to abandon their block with the result I have stated. This is not the only instance of such a nature; I receive letters every week from people who have abandoned their blocks and who now desire to return to them. Regarding the unemployed, it is true that there are more in the State this year than there have been perhaps for many years past. Several causes are responsible for this state of affairs. It is one of the penalties of the State's prosperity. Notwithstanding the number of unemployed, the State has never been more prosperous. This fact has been broadcast throughout Australia and has resulted in a large number of men coming here from the Eastern States, those men believing or expecting that employment would be plentiful where prosperity was being enjoyed. The bad season and the failure of the harvest in all the Eastern States at the same time caused a depression in the other States and accentuated the drift to Western Australia. After all, unemployment is not and cannot be confined to the boundaries of any one State in a country like Australia. Bad seasons in one part of the Continent will react on another part of it even though that part may be having a prosperous time.

Hon. G. Taylor: The other States have more unemployed than we have.

The PREMIER: That is true. A few days ago we read about ten men having been prosecuted in Kalgoorlie for travelling on the Trans. train without a ticket. A few months ago no fewer than 20 were caught on the one train and prosecuted. Nearly everyone who is able to raise his

fare has been making his way to Western Australia, whilst those who are not able to raise any funds have stowed away on the steamers or have jumped the train. This is what has created an entirely abnormal situation. The Leader of the Opposition when quoting figures, made one mistake.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I got my figures from a statistical return.

The PREMIER: The hon. member, however, made a mistake in one figure when quoting the excessive arrivals over departures for a period of years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I quoted from the "Statistical Abstract."

The PREMIER: The hon. member said that for the years 1922-23-24, the excess of male arrivals over departures was 11,389. He made a mistake of one figure, because the statistician's total is 10,389, not 11,389. Then if we take the years 1925-26-27, the hon. member said that the excess of male arrivals over departures was 9,808, or about 2,000 fewer than in the previous three years. That is not correct, because if we take 9,808 from 10,389, we get not 2,000, but 581! However, this is the important point: the hon. member quoted his figures up to the end of December.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I quoted them as they were published.

The PREMIER: That is so; I am not criticising the hon. member for doing so. He quoted the year's figures as published. On the other hand, I have some figures that throw a bright light upon the subject. The excess of arrivals over departures for the six months of this year—that is, to 30th June last—was 5,150. The average for the six years quoted by the Leader of the Opposition—three years while he was in office and three years while the present Government have been in power—showed an excess of arrivals over departures of 4,457 per year or, to put it roughly, 2,228 for each six months. On the other hand, the excess of arrivals over departures for the last six months totalled 5,150, or 3,000 above the normal average. Those figures account for the large number of unemployed here now. They prove conclusively that the excess arrivals for the first six months of this year were greater than the average excess for the whole year during each of the past six years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not year by year!

The PREMIER: Yes; that is how it averages out. It gives us 3,000 more arrivals

than departures for the half year; that is greater than the average of any six months during the past six years. Those conclusive figures must make it patent to everyone that these people have been coming in large numbers from the Eastern States. A large proportion of the men who assemble at the Labour Bureau and demand work or full sustenance, are people from South Australia, Victoria or New South Wales. That is a position no Government can meet. Neither Western Australia nor any one State of the Commonwealth can find employment for large numbers of unemployed belonging to other States of Australia; it cannot be done.

Mr. Davy: Why should it be done?

The PREMIER: Of course, why? That sort of thing causes dislocation and is certainly not fair to the State receiving the influx. It causes distress and leads to public outcry. It is all very well for the people to clamour and say that it is the duty of the Government to find work for the unemployed. Is it the duty of the Government to find employment for the unemployed of other States?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have always come here in fair numbers.

The PREMIER: The figures I have quoted show they have come in abnormal numbers. Take away the excess of 3,000 arrivals from the ranks of the unemployed here, and where will anyone find the unemployed? There will not be any at all! In fact, there would not be sufficient labour in the State, practically speaking, to meet requirements. That is the explanation of the present unemployed difficulty. I do not advance that as an excuse because the figures prove that that is the explanation of the present abnormal position.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I hope your calculations are a little better than the 33, 1/3rd one.

The PREMIER: The figures are sound. Most of these people have come from the Eastern States and yet the Government have been pilloried, because we have not been able to find work for the thousands of people who have come here to look for it! Do not members realise that in the course of a few weeks there were 2,000 men dismissed from the railway system of South Australia?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was a year ago.

The PREMIER: That is not so.

The Minister for Railways: It was some eight months ago.

The PREMIER: And the men have been drifting here all the time. That is one of the penalties of prosperity. Had we experienced a bad season last year, such as South Australia did, the position would have been known throughout the Commonwealth, and in the circumstances, there would have been no inducement for unemployed men to go to another State where unemployment was to be expected. As everyone knows, particularly those who have been through the Eastern States recently, Western Australia is talked about and written about more there than ever before, and it is because of that, that this drift of the unemployed to the West has taken place.

Mr. Lindsay: Then our unemployment trouble is really due to our prosperity?

The PREMIER: Undoubtedly that is so, coupled with the bad seasons in the Eastern States. If they had experienced good seasons there in common with ourselves, naturally there would be no unemployed leaving the other States. The two circumstances, being concurrent, led to the drift to Western Australia. I would like to issue a warning to people in the Eastern States that there is no earthly use coming here in large numbers to look for work. The State cannot find it, and it is not a fair thing that the Government of this State should be saddled with the responsibility of finding work for, or otherwise maintaining, the unemployed from the other States of Australia. Undoubtedly that is the position regarding our unemployed trouble. Then again, there is the position regarding foreigners. For the past four years about 8,000 foreigners have entered the State.

Mr. Davey: That would not create any more unemployment than if 8,000 Britishers had come in.

The Minister for Mines: But the 8,000 Britishers would be admitted under the terms of the Migration Agreement.

The PREMIER: We have been admitting Britishers in addition to the foreigners, and it is reasonable to suppose that this number of foreigners has prevented the introduction of a great number of Britishers.

Mr. Davy: Yes, but the fact that they were foreigners does not mean that they created more unemployment than if they had been Britishers.

Member. Coming here on top of the Britishers, they have.

The PREMIER: It must be remembered that we have no control over foreigners who come here, but we have control, largely if not entirely, over the number of Britishers who come in. If we find the State cannot absorb the Britishers who are coming in, we shall not allow them to come here in such numbers.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you should not do that because you get money with them.

The PREMIER: We are taking only 100 assisted migrants per month, or 1,200 per year, as against the foreigners who have been arriving here. It means that if the foreigners continue to come here at such a rate, we shall not be able to receive British migrants and, in that event, we shall not be able to take advantage of the cheap money that is available.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: Then who will do the work for us?

The Minister for Mines: The people who are here on the land.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member contend that the foreigners are the only people who can do the work?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course that is not so at all.

The PREMIER: I am amazed to think that anyone will say that the work of clearing cannot, and will not, be done by Britishers. How was this State settled and built up? In the early days of land settlement here there were no foreigners, and how was it that we made good?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Ninety-nine per cent. of the land has been cleared by English people.

The PREMIER: Yes, until recently.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, up to the present.

The PREMIER: Latterly most of the work has been done by the foreigners. It is only recently that the agricultural areas were invaded by them. Britishers do all kinds of work in this country, work that is much more humble and menial than clearing land. I think it is a monstrous thing to say that such work cannot be done except by foreigners. If that were so, then neither the present Government nor any future Government will be able to proceed with a migration scheme or with land settlement. Such schemes will have to be abandoned for we shall not be able to go ahead with them. It cannot be expected that so many foreigners can be allowed to come here and

that we shall be able to maintain the migration scheme as well, for we shall not be able to take the migrants and qualify for participation in the cheap money.

Mr. Brown: But only 3,000 foreigners are allowed to enter the whole of Australia in a year.

Members: Ridiculous!

Mr. Heron: That refers to Italians only.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course, a great many of them go back.

The PREMIER: Not so many of them, because the excess of arrivals is something like 7,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But nearly half of them go back.

The PREMIER: No, nothing approaching that proportion. However, I have indicated the position regarding unemployment. If men are going to flock here from the Eastern States and foreigners from overseas are to be admitted as well, it will mean that no Government whatever will be able to carry out a migration policy, because they will not be able to find the work for the men.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But many of those men will return to the East when there are good seasons.

The PREMIER: At any rate, unquestionably the position is as I have indicated.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The PREMIER: I desire now to refer to some of the work of the Main Roads Board and to some of its activities. It should always be remembered that this board is new. It was brought into existence to carry out a very big undertaking. It has the responsibility of expending something like £600,000 per annum over the roads of nearly the whole of the State. I have never yet known of any department, being newly created, with large and responsible work that has run smoothly and efficiently from the beginning. It takes time to get the machinery of organisation into operation before smooth and effective work can be done. And so there is no doubt mistakes have been made by this body, as there have been by all other bodies brought into existence in similar circumstances. But we find that in the early part of this year, about March or April, the Press of the State was flooded with criticisms of the

board and of the Government. The attack on the board synchronised with the approach of the Legislative Council elections. I have no hesitation in saying that the greater portion of that criticism was due to party politics. Many of those who were submitting themselves for the Council elections, being devoid of any material for a campaign, raised the cry against the board, but not so much against the board as against the Government. And so it swelled in volume as election day approached. By a rather strange coincidence there was a conference called of road boards in the north of the State towards the Murchison, and another called in the Great Southern district, and a third in the South-West, all called just a few weeks prior to the election. At those conferences all the grievances, real and imaginary, against the Main Roads Board, but principally against the Government, were poured out. I have no hesitation in saying that 95 per cent. was intended only for political propaganda for the Council elections. That is borne out by the fact that, as I say, this storm of criticism broke out only a few weeks or a month or two before the Council elections, and entirely ceased as soon as those elections were over. There have not been three letters or articles in the Press since polling day in May last. The result of those conferences has been that a conference was held in the city during the present week, composed of representatives of the municipalities and the road boards.

Mr. Ferguson: Some road boards.

The PREMIER: Well, some road boards. I notice that at that conference some members of both Houses of Parliament managed to wangle credentials to be present. For I know that the members whose names I have read in the newspaper have never been members of either a municipal council or a road board. Nevertheless they took a prominent part at the conference. There was also there an ex-member of Parliament who is to-day a very indifferent member of a road board. They all indulged in a good deal of criticism. That conference had its root and its origin in party politics and political propaganda, and true to its origin it carried on political propaganda yesterday until some of the speakers were howled down, and the meeting was often in a state of confusion and uproar.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not as much uproar as there was in the Town Hall last night.

The PREMIER: That was caused by a few scallywag communists who are paid for their propaganda in this State.

Mr. Richardson: Who pays them?

Mr. Panton: The same bloke as pays Tom Walsh.

The PREMIER: My attitude towards the communists is the same as that of the Premier of Queensland: I will smite them hip and thigh whenever and wherever I can. At this conference it was stated that the Main Roads Board was all right, except for political influence. And this ex-member of Parliament and present member of a road board said that the Government had sent Mr. Tindale away on a world tour of inspection and had spent as much money as ever they could while he was away, and that consequently when he returned there was no money left for him. There is not a scrap of truth in that statement.

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not think he went quite that far. He said the Government had spent a lot of money while Mr. Tindale was away.

The PREMIER: According to the report, he said we had spent as much as we could while Mr. Tindale was away and that when he returned he found there was no money for him. That is what the report stated. The fact is we have never in any year spent the full amount of money available, because we have not had the organisation and machinery to do it. It is wholly untrue to say there was no money available when Mr. Tindale returned.

Hon. G. Taylor: You know the man who said that.

The PREMIER: Yes, he represents on a road board the ward in which I live, and I can say confidently that that ward has the worst footpaths in the metropolitan area. I may as well add that as my representative he has entirely forfeited my confidence. There are water channels down the footpath in my street. I have approached my representative on that board and endeavoured to have the footpath repaired, but entirely without result.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will you give him a road if he ceases his attacks on the Main Roads Board?

The PREMIER: No. The fact that he is not able to attend to his duties as a member of a road board discounts what he had to say at the conference.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: On that reasoning the Government would not be allowed to speak at all.

The PREMIER: I object to any man making untrue statements. That member of a road board said there was too much political influence, or governmental influence, in the Main Roads Board.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is a matter of opinion.

The PREMIER: There is no truth in it, and no truth either in his statement about there being no money for Mr. Tindale. However, influenced, I suppose, to some extent by misstatements of that kind, and by cajolery on the part of other members, and also by the fact that the chairman of the conference for the time being became confused and lost control of the meeting, a motion was carried requesting the appointment of a Royal Commission, the object of those present being, not so much to attack the Main Roads Board, as to have a hit at the Government. This road board member to whom I have alluded said it was not fair that the Main Roads Board should carry the faults or misdeeds of the Government. So far as I have read in the newspapers, not one of the critics at those district conferences held earlier in the year, or at this wild and woolly conferences the other day, was honest enough to attribute any of the alleged grievances to the Act itself.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why say "wild and woolly"?

The PREMIER: Because the newspaper report of the proceedings said there was confusion, and that the chairman lost control of the meeting.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But do you not think those people were serious?

The PREMIER: Yes, I do.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then why describe them as wild and woolly?

The PREMIER: Because the wild and woolly men are always the most serious men. Generally the wild and woolly man is deadly serious.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But he may be genuine.

The PREMIER: Of course he is genuine enough. Many stupid people are very genuine, and many ill-informed people are very genuine.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is casting reflections.

The PREMIER: The hon. member can take it as he likes. That is just what I feel. Not one of the critics has laid the cause of his complaints at the proper door. The Act has never been brought into question. It has always been the Government. The main

cause of their complaints has been the allocation of the cost of the roads to the local bodies. That was never in the Bill as introduced by the Government and passed by this Chamber. Nearly all the grievances under which those people imagine they labour are due to the manner in which the Bill was amended in another place as the result of a select committee's deliberations.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Those levies were the main object of protest.

The PREMIER: That is so. But who was criticised because of the levies? The Government. Instead of criticising the members of another place, who are really responsible for those allocations, the people at the conference criticised the Government. In making those allocations the Government were only carrying out the Act as given to them by another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We passed that amendment here.

The PREMIER: We had to, but it was not in the original Bill; it was never part of the Government's policy.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: But something much worse was, namely, the taking away of the license fees.

The PREMIER: Those critics, if they desire to be fair, should direct their criticism at those responsible for the defects in the Act, not at the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But we accepted the Council's amendments, you know.

Hon. G. Taylor: If the Premier had heard the debate at the conference—

The PREMIER: I can only judge by the report in the newspaper, and by the newspaper reports of the proceedings at those district conferences that were held prior to the Legislative Council elections. There is not a shadow of doubt that the conferences were called for political reasons because the Council elections were pending.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: No, the writs happened to be issued just at that time.

The PREMIER: They knew perfectly well that if the Government administered the Act, the levies would have to be issued. It was laid down in the Act as a result of amendments made in another place. It was not the proposal of the Government and it was not introduced into this House.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did you see the agenda paper of that conference?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. G. Taylor: You have not grasped the situation.

The PREMIER: I know that some members and the ex-member of Parliament confined their remarks to the Government. They said, "It is due to political influence; let us have a Royal Commission so that the blame will be placed on the Government and not on the Chairman of the Main Roads Board."

Mr. J. H. Smith: Generally speaking members of Parliament did not attend. The Premier ought to be fair.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Leader of the Opposition was not present at that time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, I was there with the Minister.

The PREMIER: I am not talking about the annual conference of road boards. I am talking of the political conference—

Mr. J. H. Smith: Be fair about it.

The PREMIER: The semi-political conference, or the attempt made by some members to turn it into a political conference.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Well, be fair about it.

The PREMIER: I am referring not to the proper annual conference, but to the conference of casual blow-in delegates. They will get no Royal Commission from the present Government on that proposal.

Mr. Lindsay: The annual road board conference turned it down.

The PREMIER: Any body of sensible men would turn it down.

Mr. Lindsay: Thanks on behalf of the conference.

The PREMIER: At the annual conference of road boards held yesterday and to-day the true representatives of road boards turned down the proposal for a Royal Commission. That would seem to indicate that the members of the municipalities who attended the other conference must have been mainly responsible for that resolution.

Mr. Lindsay: In fact, we turned down the whole of the resolutions that had been carried.

The PREMIER: Of course you did, being the true representatives of the road boards, and knowing your work. You could not do otherwise than repudiate the whole of the doings of the other conference.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why fear a Royal Commission?

The PREMIER: We do not fear a Royal Commission, but we do not want to make ourselves look silly by appointing Royal Commissions when there is no justification for them. A Royal Commission to inquire into an Act of Parliament! It is the duty of this House to know when Acts of Par-

liament need amending, and to amend them accordingly. If we are unable to discover the defects in Acts of Parliament, and amend them, we are not fit for our job. We do not want Royal Commissions to tell us, when, how, and where the Act ought to be amended. If I were thinking of appointing a Royal Commission at all, I would appoint Mr. Stewart as sole Commissioner to inquire into the Act. He was responsible more than anyone else for some of the chief defects in the Act, and it would be rather well to appoint him to review his own work of a year or two ago. My complaint is that the resolution contained an undercurrent of politics. The Act itself and those responsible for the provisions of the Act that have caused the trouble did not come in for any criticism, complaint, or condemnation at all. In the circumstances, I am glad that the real annual road board conference have put the other people in their place. I have not yet read the report of the annual conference proceedings, but I have no doubt the business was conducted without uproar or confusion and certainly not in any wild or woolly fashion.

Mr. Lindsay: You have to thank Mr. Tindale for his speech at the conference this morning.

The PREMIER: I am pleased that he attended and cleared up matters. I am also pleased that he did not speak to the unauthorised and improper conference. In fact, I suggested to him that he should not waste time talking to the unauthorised body at all. I knew the genesis of that conference; I knew whence it sprung and which way its decisions would go.

Mr. Lindsay: We hope Mr. Tindale will be able to live up to the speech he made this morning.

The PREMIER: I do not know what he said, but I have no doubt he will be able to live up to it. A conference of South-Western district road boards was held some time ago at which all sorts of statements were made regarding the Main Roads Board. A deputation was appointed to wait on me, but when it arrived the men who had made all the noise at the conference and were responsible for all the mis-statements uttered at the conference were strangely silent. They did not then repeat any of the mis-statements they had made at the conference. I had gone to a good deal of trouble to be prepared for the points that I imagined

they would put before me, based upon the statements made at the conference, and I was surprised to find that none of the statements was made to me by the deputation. When I expressed my surprise to a member of the deputation, he replied, "Yes, that was said by so-and-so and so-and-so. They talk that kind of nonsense when there is no one there to contradict them, but they were not game to say it to-day."

Mr. J. H. Smith: When was that conference held?

The PREMIER: It was a conference held in the South-West, at Bunbury, I think.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I do not know anything about it.

The PREMIER: Men go to those conferences, get Press representatives there, and make statements that are published, and 75 per cent. of what they say is misrepresentation. They have no regard at all for facts. Consequently there has been created in the public mind a feeling against the Main Roads Board that is wholly unfair. Admitting whatever defects or shortcomings the board may possess—we all have them; no one is perfect—75 per cent. of the criticism levelled at the board is entirely unfair and without justification.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They are nearly all opposed to these levies, and we want to know whether you are going to withdraw them.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will get an assurance from his colleague in another place that he will permit us to amend the Act in that direction, I shall consider the matter. I do not want to waste time carrying necessary amendments through this House only to have them rejected in another place. If the hon. member will consult those who were responsible for the enactment of the objectionable provisions and get an assurance that they are agreeable to an amendment, we might consider the matter.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Do you imply that the hon. member controls the key of politics?

The PREMIER: No, but he belongs to a party, one of whose members was mainly responsible for the enactment of those provisions.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: He was also responsible for obtaining the license fees for the local bodies.

The PREMIER: He was mainly responsible for every one of those provisions to

which exception has been taken. Consequently, it is only a reasonable request that the hon. member should ascertain the views of that member in another place.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then we have reached a pretty bad state.

The PREMIER: The conference even went so far as to select a member of the proposed Royal Commission.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: A very good one, too.

The PREMIER: I have no doubt about that. I do not know the gentleman.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is the chairman of the road board conference.

The PREMIER: But the conference delegates were so sure of their ground that they appointed a member of the Royal Commission. I am sorry to inform them that there will not be any Royal Commission.

Mr. Lindsay: He is the chairman of the road board conference and a good man, too.

The PREMIER: I am sorry he was not chairman of the other rally. Had he presided over that gathering also, it might have been held in better control.

Mr. Davy: What is the answer to the criticism regarding the expenditure of £133,000 for reconstructing ten miles of the Canning Road?

The PREMIER: I have already said there is no doubt that the Main Roads Board have made mistakes, just as other people make mistakes.

Hon. G. Taylor: That work was not done by the Main Roads Board.

The PREMIER: Yes, it was.

Hon. G. Taylor: It was constructed out of loan money.

The PREMIER: Yes, but by the Main Roads Board. It is immaterial where the money came from. I admit at once that the cost of that work was altogether greater than it ought to have been. For that there were several reasons. The road is a better one than was really needed in the circumstances. The engineers altered the specification. The original specification provided for ironstone lumps. That was altered and granite and bluestone were substituted.

Mr. Davy: There is a lot of limestone in it.

The PREMIER: The granite had to be quarried in the hills and brought down at great expense.

Mr. Davy: There is miles and miles of limestone foundation.

The PREMIER: Not miles and miles of it. After the alteration was discovered, the latter portion of the road was changed, but the real reason for the excessive cost is that granite and bluestone, which were substituted, had to be quarried and brought from the hills and were ever so much more expensive. Further, the road was widened by 2ft. from the original specification without giving any real advantage. The original specification provided for a double roadway, but to widen it by two feet without making provision for a third vehicle was without any advantage at all. Kerbing was also included and that was not provided for in the first instance, and I believe it was unnecessary. The cost was altogether more than it should have been. No one can deny that. One of the principal engineers who, I believe, was mainly responsible for it, is no longer in the service. For my part, I would not attempt to justify the cost of that road, although it must be admitted that when the road is finished it will probably be the best in the State. The foundations are exceptionally good and it is a permanent road that will last for all time, but still it was built more strongly and more expensively than the times called for or the needs justified.

Hon. G. Taylor: Can you complete it for the money already voted, £140,000, I think?

The PREMIER: For less than that.

Mr. Davy: Is it a fact that you could have put down a wood-blocked surface road with a concrete foundation for the same money?

The PREMIER: No. For my part, the road would never have been commenced. No Government would have sanctioned the commencement of a job like that if they had known what it was going to cost.

Hon. G. Taylor: You voted only £35,000.

The PREMIER: Something like that. We could have built a railway on the south side of the river from Fremantle to Midland Junction, I believe, for that money, which would have been of great benefit to the State, and diverted the heavy goods traffic from the eastern and northern districts and obviated the necessity for its passing through the Perth yards.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why did you not do that?

The PREMIER: I thought I had, explained that, had we imagined it would cost this money, we would never have built the road. We would have preferred to build a railway. We were led to believe by the estimates submitted to us that it would cost

only about one-third of the amount it actually did cost.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is, £35,000.

The PREMIER: Yes. We were misled, as Governments before us have been misled and Governments to follow us will be misled, by the estimates put before them by responsible officers.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And the same officers are serving year in and year out, and are still in control.

The PREMIER: Has the hon. member been asleep? I have just said that the engineer responsible is no longer in the service.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Some of the other heads are.

The PREMIER: I hope there will be no repetition of the Canning business.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The same thing applies to group settlement.

Mr. Davy: There is an 8-mile an hour limit on the road now. It will all be in the bush by the end of the winter.

The PREMIER: That is why the speed limit has been reduced. By the time the bitumen blanket had been put on the road would have been partially destroyed had the speed not been cut down. The work will be done as soon as the winter is over, and has been let on contract.

Hon. G. Taylor: It must have been very hard for you to sign that contract.

The PREMIER: No. In conclusion I wish to say that the Government do not claim to have done anything extraordinary. We have never claimed to be more than just plain, blunt men trying to carry out a policy in the interests of the State. We have for the past four years steadily pursued a policy which we believe will aid in the development of the country, and the increase of wealth production. Western Australia being a primary producing country, and having little in the way of secondary or other industries, we must shape our course as a Parliament in order to develop the primary industries, and to give every possible assistance to people engaged in that direction. As little money as possible should be spent on works which will not assist in increasing our wealth production. Whilst bridges may be required over rivers, and there will come a time when such bridges will have to be built, nevertheless the expenditure of half a million pounds or a million pounds on their construction will not add one pound to the wealth production of the State. I admit they would be a great con-

venience and offer better facilities to those who have occasion to use them, but they will not bring money back into the State, or add to its production. So it is with harbours. Expenditure on harbour improvements is very necessary, but how much better would it be if we could postpone the expenditure of £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 in that direction, and lay it out in the country districts in opening up new areas, or providing better facilities for those which are already held by settlers.

Hon. G. Taylor: You must have your ports.

The PREMIER: Yes. It should be the policy of the State to curtail expenditure of that kind to the very lowest possible limit, and to direct the expenditure into those channels that will bring the greatest wealth to the country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And provide employment for the people too.

The PREMIER: Yes, reproductive employment, employment that would be to the benefit of everybody. In pursuance of that policy the Government have been building railways into the country. We have been building roads, and have been spending money on harbour improvements.

Mr. Lutey: And on water supply.

The PREMIER: We have spent large sums of money on country water supplies in addition to metropolitan water supplies. We have been trying to carry out a policy in the direction I have indicated. I believe that is the only kind of policy for any Government in this State to carry out. We yield to no one in our desire to see Western Australia advance, to see its resources opened up and developed, in the hope that one day it will become a State so that our children and Western Australia's children to come afterwards may look with pride upon the heritage that will have been built up for them, and have reason to regard it as second to none in the Commonwealth or any other part of the world. I believe it is by a policy of that kind, directed in the way I have indicated, that this great heritage will be developed and expanded. I am certain that in years to come, when most of the Crown lands have been settled, and when Western Australia shall have reached the stage of development that exists, say, in Victoria or one of the other older States of the Commonwealth, the citizens of that day who will be fortunate enough to live in this country, will have cause to say that the Parliaments

of the present day and of the past truly did something to contribute towards making this the great State it will then have become.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [8.7]: It has been rather inspiring to hear the conclusion of the Premier's speech. He has voiced sentiments that I feel sure will appeal to every member of the House.

Mr. Marshall: He has made it hard for you to be critical.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We should endeavour to be fair to one another if we can. He has expressed himself in a manner that must appeal to every member. I am heartily in accord with him in his policy for opening up and developing the great resources of this country. It has been well stated in the Speech that we are now passing through an historical period, and approaching another period that will be looked back upon in after years as one of startling development for Western Australia. Great developmental schemes are in the air. I am particularly pleased to note the methods that have been adopted for safeguarding the 3,500 farms scheme. It would have been well if such precautions had been taken in connection with our group settlement scheme.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You should qualify that statement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What do you mean to infer by that?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Migration and Development Commission has insisted upon a certain amount of investigation being made before this particular scheme is entered upon, and upon a considerable sum of money being devoted to that work before it is carried into operation.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What about the seasons?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: This move is a good one, and the right one to make.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You may say that of the wheat scheme, or any other scheme.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am pleased to hear that the Leader of the Country Party has taken some little credit for the development of what may be termed the Great Southern wheat belt.

Mr. J. H. Smith: He is a wonderful man, that chap.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: One of the planks of the platform of the Country Party is—

We believe a comprehensive scheme of railway construction should be drawn up by the

Railway Advisory Board in consultation with the Lands and Agricultural Departments. It is considered that from Southern Cross in the north to well below Ongerup in the south, and stretching out east far beyond the Esperance-Norseman railway, we have a large area of land suitable for settlement. We believe that the Immigration Agreement, which makes money available for ten years at an average cost of 1½ per cent., should be fully availed of for the purpose of opening up that vast area of land, and making it possible for our many land seekers to obtain farms under the terms of that agreement. We should borrow the money and put into effect our policy of railways preceding settlement, thus providing land for immediate settlement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And make Fremantle, on Mr. Stileman's report, your centre. You are going against your own State.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: This has been advocated by the Country Party since 1920. It has now been carried into effect. In 1923 I happened to be at a dinner at Lake Grace, when I heard corroborative utterances from a man who had lived for 20 years in the Ravensthorpe district, concerning the large areas of country so well known to most of us through the survey parties which have been out, and through the investigations made since. At that dinner there was present Mr. Allum, manager of one of the mines at Ravensthorpe. He stated, in reply to the remark that Ravensthorpe was isolated, that it was only out of the way. He went on to enumerate the fine areas of wheat lands between there and Southern Cross, and voiced the opinion that before many years they would be producing as much wheat as the rest of the State was yielding. Whether that will come to pass or not remains to be seen. Some people may live to see part of that prognostication carried into effect.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are only on the fringe of things now.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: At the time I was there we used to talk about Forrestania as being an unknown area. I met surveyors who told me there were great forests of country in that direction, but they did not know how far they extended. Forrestania was spoken of as being in the never-never country, but now it is close home, and development is going on there. That country is now becoming well known, and men are settling there.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You are a wonderful optimist now.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I was rather amused when the Premier referred to "alleged" grievances in connection with the work of the Main Roads Board. The grievances refer not so much to the board as to the impossible conditions imposed upon local authorities in the way of specifications and useless surveys. In my electorate there is a large camp of men now engaged in making unnecessary surveys for roads, doing work which has no practical utility whatever. The surveys already existing will suffice for any of the roads required. I may give another instance, again from my own electorate. Roads have been constructed there at a cost of £1,000 per mile. For that same sum of £1,000, utilised as local roads boards would utilise it, eight or nine miles of road could be constructed.

Mr. Panton: But would that construction suit the Federal Government?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: This country is not like Victoria, which can do with chains of roads where we require miles of pioneering roads, with 33 ft. of earth formation and 12 ft. of gravel. Five miles out from Kellerberrin, where the traffic mainly centres, there is 44 ft. of earth formation with 16½ feet of gravel. Such a road is re-formed every second year. This particular road carries a heavy tonnage of wheat and chaff, and it is the admiration of everyone who visits the district. In fact, engineers who have inspected it have congratulated the local road board upon having done such good work at such small cost.

Mr. J. H. Smith. Is that work done by the Main Roads Board?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No; by the local road board. Conditions in the district represented by the hon. member interjecting are altogether different from those obtaining in the eastern areas. I repeat, £1,000, which builds one mile of road under Main Roads Board conditions, would under local road board conditions make eight or nine miles of road such as would serve the needs of the settlers for 30 years. I think the hon. member wanted that point brought out.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Yes, I did.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: South of Kellerberrin there is a road upon one mile of which the Main Roads Board have spent £1,000. The road had a natural gravel surface. The Main Roads Board picked that surface up and then carted gravel on to the road.

Mr. Davy: They have spent money all right.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Premier is quite correct in stating that it was a stupendous task to start a big concern like the Main Roads Board, particularly when the head man was absent abroad. The hon. gentleman might well have instanced the Industries Assistance Board as it was operating here in 1914 and 1915. Everyone knows that the office was then in a state of confusion and chaos, and that months elapsed before anything like order could be evolved out of it. I have a vivid recollection of what I went through during that period with regard to hundreds of men who were endeavouring to get into the board's office to interview Mr. Camm or whoever happened to be in charge at the time. They were standing 10 or 12 deep, waiting to be admitted. One man came down to Perth, having sold his fowls and pigs to get the fare and being on his last shilling. He really could not afford to wait, and fortunately I was able to get him admitted to the office, and he was sent away happy with his super promised to him. That was the condition of the Industries Assistance Board at that time, and no doubt a good deal of the same sort of thing applies to the Main Roads Board. Last night I asked various questions, which the Premier evaded, regarding the much-talked-of Canning-road. It is all very well to say the Government did not know what the road was going to cost. Though that may be so, there is the fact that last year's Estimates contained an amount of £121,000 to cover the cost of eight miles of that road. The amount in question compares with £80,000 set down for the Elanding Northwards Railway, and with £25,000 set down for the Bullfinch Railway. As a country representative seeking proper transport facilities for the people of my electorate, I am naturally somewhat concerned to find that the Loan Estimates provided £121,000 for eight miles of road as against £105,000 for two railways aggregating 67 miles. The Premier suggested that the South Swan railway might have been built for the amount spent on the Canning-road. Certainly the amount would have been useful in starting my particular railway, the Yarramony. I have put various questions relating to Mr. Stileman's report on the further extension of the Fremantle harbour and the provision of additional wharf space for handling outward cargo. In my opinion, bulk handling will be brought about in this country simply by the sheer weight of the produce. Mr. Suttou

has stated that when Western Australia produces a crop of 50,000,000 bushels, bulk handling will inevitably force itself upon us. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of bulk handling as compared with bag handling, the former is being forced upon our attention as an effect of the rapid increase in our wheat export during the last three years. Three years ago we produced 13,000,000 bushels. That quantity has been nearly trebled since, and it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that within the next decade we shall double the present season's quantity. Again, if a crop of 50,000,000 bushels is produced in the centenary year, how is it to be handled? Fremantle harbour to-day has 3,200 feet of wharf space for handling the export of bagged wheat. By means of that 3,200 feet of space we handle about 18,000,000 bushels; that is, of bagged wheat. Compare those figures with bulk handling at Glebe Island terminal elevators in Sydney, where with something less than half the space, 1,540 feet, 45,000,000 bushels of export wheat can be handled. The reason why I put my questions was that Mr. Stileman's report made no allusion whatever to bulk handling. The Acting Minister for Works told us to-night that bulk handling of wheat had been taken into consideration when it was determined to provide 7,200 odd feet of wharf space in the scheme for extending the Fremantle harbour. I hope that is so; if it is, we shall be all right. On the other hand, there can be no question that the bulk handling of wheat demands far less space than bag handling. In any case, I must repeat that whatever the merits or demerits of bulk handling, that system is bound to be forced on us, willy-nilly, in the end; the mere weight of our wheat production will demand it. If the Minister for Railways is in office five years hence, he will have something to do to get the wheat shipped.

Mr. Panton: He will be in office.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Even to-day there remains in the country a large quantity of wheat which it has not been possible to move. Many references have already been made to land settlement, and I shall not labour the subject further. It is encouraging to learn from the Premier that our own boys and men are to be given a chance to get land. Having a lively remembrance of the opening of Muresk Agricultural College by the Premier—we have a lot of young fellows there who will make good farmers—I was sorry when some of the students whom I met the other day showed themselves a

little downhearted. There were four or five of them, and they had applied for land and had been turned down. I pointed out to them that this was their first application, and that any number of people had applied six or seven times before succeeding, that all they had to do was to keep on trying, and that in time they would no doubt get blocks on which they could make homes. Those young fellows will be pleased to learn that there is to be no differentiation at all, and that they will take their chance with others, so that all they need do is to persevere in applying.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are those youths migrants?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No; students at Muresk. If they keep on trying, each of them will no doubt get one of the 3,500 farms in the end.

Mr. Teesdale: Plenty of poor devils have grown whiskers while waiting.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes; I know one young lad at Meckering who has applied unsuccessfully nine times, and now he is fed up.

Hon. G. Taylor: I know one young man who has had 60 applications in.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The board have become dissatisfied with the provision for the payment of £3 when applying for more than seven blocks, and have now decided that if selectors wish to apply for additional blocks, they will have to pay additional fees. In the past it has been the practice for men who have money, to put in a great many applications, hoping that their names will be kept before the board, who will give them a chance.

Mr. Teesdale: A lot of them will get their chance after death!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In my constituency there are a number of areas such as those about Westonia, Carrabin, and elsewhere that are held up as reserves for timber or water supplies. I do not know if there is any intention to go in for reforestation, but for many years those blocks will be of no use at all. They have been a harbour for vermin, although there are portions of them that would make good wheat farms. I hope to have the Minister in my district shortly, and I will then point out to him that there are many people willing to take up the land and make it wealth-producing.

Mr. Lutey: Are not those areas reserved for miners?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No; some of them are marked as timber reserves and some as re-

serves for water supply, although there will never be any water there except such as will fall from the heavens. Last night the Leader of the Country Party voiced sentiments with which everyone must be in accord. He said that we were entering upon a period that called for the heartiest co-operation of members sitting in all parts of the House. I think the Premier must have been impressed by the speeches that have been made so far, and that he is assured of the co-operation of all parties in the work of building up the State, developing our resources, and achieving the end we desire—that Western Australia shall be the largest wheat-producing State of Australia. There is another small matter that was discussed at the road board conference.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do not bring up any more of those conference discussions here!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I refer to the incidence of the vermin tax. That incidence is wrong. When the Bill was before Parliament, it was introduced at the request of farmers and pastoralists. They expected to have to pay taxation, but did not expect to get it in the neck. During the year the southern half of the State—that is the farming section—has paid £23,000 in vermin taxes, whereas the pastoralists have paid about £10,000. On the other hand, the payments for dingo scalps have been quite the reverse. Something like £20,000 has been paid for scalps in the North and between £11,000 and £12,000 in the South. We have rather more sheep in the South than there are in the North, and it does not seem fair that the South should pay $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as much as the North and the payment for scalps be $2\frac{1}{2}$ times more in the North than in the South.

Hon. G. Taylor: Over 15,000 scalps were paid for last year.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay), who is on the vermin board, has details about the number of sheep, the tax collected and the scalps paid for both in the North and in the South. I understand he will give those details when he is speaking. The Premier twitted me about my advocacy of the Yarramony railway, and introduced a new phase of the controversy. I did not know the fact that I had asked questions had kept the railway back for 20 years. If that is so, and I have retarded the railway construction for that period, the next time I ask a question I shall have attained my majority with my

questions, but I hope that before then something will have been done by the Government for the settlers. There are many soldier settlers along the route of the proposed railway. At Quelling the settlers have been almost starved out because they cannot make economic propositions out of their holdings. It is pleasing to know that the Ejanding Northwards railway is to be extended to Lake Mollerin, and that other railways are to be attended to. While that is all very well, it is rather hard on these people who have been waiting for their railway for over 20 years. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) complained about his railway that had been authorised for two years only. The people who are vitally concerned with the Yarramony railway have been the victims of the political life of years past, for it has been such that one party after another has evaded promises that were made, and to-day they seem to be as far off the realisation of their desires as ever. I was told by one of the settlers who had spoken to someone who was apparently in the know that he had received the advice, "Be patient and you will get your railway." As that settler said, the people there have been patient for 20 years. That particular settler said he did not suppose it mattered much to him if the railway did not come for another 20 years, but the young people were getting fed up and were leaving the farms. I hope the Government will see if something cannot be done very soon for these people. The answers I received to my questions during the last session of Parliament were not at all satisfactory. I do not think that some of the latest proposals for light transport facilities have been inquired into thoroughly. I hope the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Stileman, will let us know if some means of transport cannot be provided for the people I am so concerned about. Mr. Timms and another gentleman are expected to arrive here shortly to discuss some new system of putting down rails alongside roads, and I hope the Government will investigate that proposal.

Mr. Teesdale: How far have those settlers been carting?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Upwards of 21 and 22 miles.

Mr. Teesdale: Carting water, too?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No, I think most of the settlers there have their dams. However, I am almost afraid to ask further questions, particularly when I am told by the Premier that every time I ask a question

I put the railway back for another 12 months. Former members representing my constituency said nothing about it and they got nothing; I have been asking questions and trying to get something, and now I am blamed for putting the railway off 12 months at a time! Fortunately, my electors know whose fault it is. It is not the fault of one individual, but of many individuals.

Mr. Teesdale: They will have another chance at the next elections.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I did not come prepared to make a speech this evening, but thought I would like to deal with one or two points. The Leader of the Country Party spoke fully on many subjects and I agree with his sentiments. The spirit of his speech must have appealed to the House. I hope the session will prove to be a useful one and that the next harvest will be excellent. I travelled out as far as Southern Cross the other day and was delighted to find how splendid the crops were looking. The prospects are indeed satisfactory, and I trust the returns will go far towards realising our desire to secure 50,000,000 bushels during the centenary year.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.43 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 14th August, 1928.

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

QUESTION—ENTERTAINMENTS TAX.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Chief Secretary: What revenue have the Government derived from the Entertainments Tax Act passed in 1925, for each respective year ended the 30th June?