

altered the boundaries of the Council Provinces. That constitutional point was raised and disallowed. Apart from that, I hope and trust the same reasoning and allocation will not be part and parcel of the Commissioners' instructions when they got out to fix the boundaries of the Council Provinces. Before sitting down, I should like to say a word or two about the difference in the economic value of our southern lands, particularly in the vicinity of the Kalgan Plains, due to the application of superphosphate and the sowing of clover seeds. All around that centre there is a vast area where really good settlers have demonstrated that it is practicable to fully develop that land by those means. That land dressed with super and sown with clover is capable of carrying at least one sheep to the acre, while much of it will carry two sheep to the acre. There is a vast extent of that country, I do not know how many thousands of acres, but not far from its termination over the Stirling Ranges we come into one of the highest production wheat districts in the State. There we touch the Borden country and the Gnowangerup country. In consideration of the proved value of those lands by settlers on the spot, I am hoping that there will be constructed a continuation of the Karlgarin-Lake Grace railway from Lake Grace through the Stirling Ranges over the Kalgan Plains and right down into the Port of Albany. That is a national job, and I hope an entirely new classification of those lands will be made. We have had a most unfortunate classification down there. I am not complaining of it, but it was arrived at before we knew anything of clovers or of the natural effect of superphosphate. Since the application of those two factors, the whole economic value has been changed and we have now justification for building a line through what was thought a few years ago to be almost valueless country. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 31st July, 1929.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL WATER SUPPLIES.

Mr. THOMSON (for Mr. Latham) asked the Premier: 1, What amount of money was spent on the Narembeen water scheme under the Migration Agreement? 2, What amount was spent in the Esperance district on water supplies under the Migration Agreement.

The PREMIER replied: 1, £63,488 8s. 1d. 2, £64,961 15s. 11d.

QUESTION—ALSATIAN DOGS.

Mr. LINDSAY asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware of the resolution carried at the conference of Ministers of Agriculture, held recently in Melbourne, regarding the introduction of legislation in the various States to destroy or sterilise Alsation dogs? 2, Does he intend to introduce a Bill this session in conformity with that resolution?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1, Yes. 2, The recommendation contained in the resolution is receiving consideration.

QUESTIONS (2)—APPRENTICES.

Trade Quota.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the quota of apprentices to journeymen in the different trades for which the State Arbitration Court has made

awards? 2, The number of apprentices actually registered in the different trades?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The answer to this question really involves a return which covers five pages of closely-typed matter. I hope that I will not be expected to read it, but that it may be laid on the Table.

Railway Workshops Quota.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: What number of apprentices is permitted by the different awards operating in the Government Railway Workshops and what number is actually engaged?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Number of apprentices permitted under awards—391. 2, Number actually engaged—236.

QUESTIONS (2)—LAND SETTLEMENT.

Residence Conditions.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it a fact that while the residence conditions are strictly enforced upon selectors of conditional purchase land, Parliamentarians are exempt? 2, If this be so, will he announce the reason for granting such favours to Parliamentarians only?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

Peel Estate Blocks.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it a fact that certain portions of the Peel Estate are being held in reserve, pending negotiations with citizens or the Government of Malta, or both, the object being to release such land for the purpose of settling Maltese migrants? 2, If so, before any agreement becomes effective between the Government and those concerned in Malta, will the Government agree to (a) present to the House a copy of the agreement upon which the reserved land will be disposed of to the Maltese; (b) Give Western Australian citizens preference to the land on conditions similar to those contained in the agreement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No negotiations are pending with the Maltese or any other Government, and no arrangements whatever have been made in respect to Maltese migrants. 136 improved

blocks in the Peel Estate have already been made available to the public under ordinary conditions of settlement, and a number of these are still open for application by any British subject. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—SHEEP DISEASE:

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it a fact, as reported in the Press on the 29th July, that after three or four years of investigation the origin of the Braxy-like disease in sheep has been discovered? 2, If so, will he make public at an early date the results of the investigations, in view of the necessity for sheep owners to adopt any known preventive measures to counteract the ravages of the disease?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1, The immediate cause has been discovered, but further investigations into other factors are necessary. 2, The known facts have been published in the Journal of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Volume 2, No. 2, page 109. Further reports will be published on completion of investigations now proceeding.

QUESTION—DRIED FRUITS ACT, EXTENSION.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: Is it his intention to introduce this session a Bill for the extension of the operation of the Dried Fruits Act, 1926?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: Yes.

QUESTIONS (2)—FEDERAL ROAD GRANTS.

Money Unexpended.

Hon. G. TAYLOR asked the Minister for Works: 1, Does any of the money available under the Federal Road Grant up to the 30th June last remain unallotted and unspent? 2, If so, how much.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Of the amount of money available under the Federal Road Grant up to the 30th June, 1929, the amount unexpended is £579,943, out of which £3,713 15s. 1d. is unallotted.

Money Withheld.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Works: 1, What amount did the Federal Government withhold from payment in respect of road work done by the State Government during January, February, and March of 1927? 2, Was the work done by day labour?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The information sought by this question has been given to the House on several occasions previously and is: 1, £30,487 19s. 6d. 2, Petty contract and day labour.

QUESTIONS (2)—GROUP SETTLEMENT.

Field Supervision Costs, Busselton.

Mr. BARNARD asked the Minister for Lands: Would it be possible to supply particulars of the cost of field supervision of the group settlements in the Busselton district for the last financial year, giving each item of expenditure separately?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The information will take some time to get out, and if desired, the hon. member must move for a return.

Valuation Board's Report.

Mr. BARNARD asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How many valuations have been completed by the Group Settlement Valuation Board? 2, When will they be made available to the settlers and the public?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: A return giving the information desired was laid on the Table of the House last evening, and notification is being sent to the settlers concerned.

QUESTION—DILLON CASE.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Has he perused the report of the Royal Commission appointed to examine the Dillon case? 2, If so, does he propose (a) to compensate Venetia Dillon; (b) to take any steps to prevent similar irregularities in future; (c) to trace and punish the guilty party?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, Yes. 2 (a) No. (b) This aspect is under consideration. (c) Efforts have already been made to this end.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Premier, sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

Library Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Angelo and Mr. Corboy.

Standing Orders Committee—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Hon. W. J. George, Mr. Latham and Mr. Marshall.

House Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chesson, Mr. Lambert, Mr. Stubbs, and Mr. Teesdale.

Printing Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Panton, and Mr. J. MacCallum Smith.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. North, leave of absence granted for two weeks to Mr. Teesdale (Roebourne), and for three weeks to Mr. Angelo (Gascoyne) on the ground of urgent public business.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.42]: This is the fifteenth occasion on which I have had the privilege of taking part in the debate on the Address-in-reply. Probably there will be very serious changes in the personnel of the House when we meet to discuss the next Address-in-reply, and I may be one of the members affected by the change. No matter how much we may criticise each other, however, I think it can fairly be said that each section is honestly imbued with a desire to do what it considers best in the interests of the State. I have remarked on previous occasions that the present Premier should be called "Lucky Collier." Though, as Treasurer, he has many worries and troubles, and is expected to do much work with a limited amount of money, there is no gainsaying the fact that when he took office after years of depression, most of which was due to the war, he was lucky enough to receive the benefit of the efforts of Federal and State members to impress upon the Commonwealth Government the many disabilities suffered by Western Australia under Federation. When the findings of the Federal Royal Commission were

given effect to, Mr. Collier was fortunate enough to be the Treasurer to reap a very substantial benefit in the shape of the amount granted by way of a disabilities grant.

The Premier: No, the taxpayers were the fortunate ones, because every penny of it was given away in reduced taxation.

Mr. THOMSON: Nevertheless the Treasurer was fortunate in having available considerably more money that enabled him to reduce taxation.

Mr. Sleeman: That has been said on every Address-in-reply since.

Mr. THOMSON: And I am saying it again. It is certainly true that he used portion of it to reduce the income tax by 33 per cent., and that portion of the first year's grant was earmarked for assistance to mining, the balance being applied in reduction of the then deficit. When the Treasurer budgeted for a surplus, and got a small one, I in common with others was disposed to be optimistic regarding the financial future of the State; but it is to be regretted that while the Treasurer budgeted last year for a surplus of £94,198, he closed with a deficit of £275,968, or £181,770 worse than he anticipated. I shall not enter into a close scrutiny of the finances at this stage, because opportunity for that will arise on the Budget; but I trust that before the Estimates are submitted the Auditor General's report will be available, so that we may be enabled to make a close dissection of the State's finances. It is true that we have £350,000 in a suspense account, but I do not think that even for one moment will the Treasurer claim this amount as having been saved by any administrative act of the Government. Rather is it another of the lucky events in the history of the present Administration. While this State has not much to thank Federation for, we can at least tender to the Bruce-Page Government our recognition of their action in enabling the Western Australian Parliament to ease the burden of taxation for a period of five years. I am hopeful that the savings effected through the Financial Agreement will be utilised to reduce taxation. May I suggest to the Premier—I think this should appeal to him now that he is interested in the farming industry—that there should be a restoration of the exemption up to £250 in respect of all land deemed to be taxable, and, further, that where income is derived from utilisation

and cultivation of land, only one tax should be paid. The Premier has probably realised from personal experience the unfairness of the imposition of the land tax on the primary producers, and the burden it represents to them. I hope, therefore, that the £350,000 in suspense will be used to relieve the burden now pressing heavily upon the primary producing section. As I have stated here previously, out of the amount of the disabilities grants, £200,000 has been used for reduction of the income tax by 33 per cent, £165,924 has been earmarked for assistance to mining, and £200,000 has been applied to reducing a former deficit. I hope that no portion of the £350,000 now being saved in payment of interest and sinking fund through the Financial Agreement, will be utilised for the reduction of our deficit. It should rather be applied to lessen the undue burden of taxation upon the whole of our people. The Governor's Speech mentions that the wheat position looks much more promising. That fact, fortunately for the State, arises from the misfortunes of other parts of the world interested in primary production. Eight or nine weeks ago the outlook of the Western Australian wheat industry was certainly far from promising. Everyone in the State, and especially the Government in their desire to push the 3,500 farms scheme, must feel greatly encouraged by the improvement in the price of wheat. We are hoping to have a harvest of from 45 to 50 million bushels. With present prospects we have every reason to believe that that expectation will be realised. In New South Wales and in portions of Victoria and South Australia the prospects of the wheat farmer are unsatisfactory owing to bad seasons, and we have every reason to be grateful to the Creator for having granted us a highly promising season with an abundance of rain that practically ensures a profitable harvest. If the forecast of 50 million bushels is realised, it will mean more work for our people, more revenue for the Railway Department, and more taxable incomes for the Treasurer. The wool position, unfortunately, is not equally satisfactory. However, we shall have to increase our wool production, and by improved methods it is hoped that where we now carry one sheep, we shall be able to carry two or three. In that way we may be able to meet the position created by the reduction in the price of wool. Wool growers are entering upon

a campaign to encourage the wider use of wool. It behoves every member of this community to realise that the wool industry is the financial backbone of the Commonwealth. If a position unsatisfactory and unprofitable to the wool producers should arise, I fear that Australia as a whole, and particularly Western Australia, will suffer considerably. I should like to quote an extract from the report of a lecture recently given by Professor L. F. Giblin before the Melbourne University on the subject of the Tariff. He said that people were prepared to sacrifice absolute necessities for alcohol and tobacco, which played a part in demands for higher wages and thus were not in the pure luxury class. He called them "conventional luxuries." The point I stress is this: The professor stated that English taxation on necessities amounted to 13s. per head, and similar taxation in Australia to 40s. per head, and that it should be Australia's aim to approach the English standard. He went on to say that the total burden on industry through the Tariff could not be less than 20 million pounds, and he calculated that in the passing on of that tax probably about £4,000,000 would stick but that ultimately £16,000,000 of the £20,000,000 would come home to roost on the primary producer and others engaged in unsheltered industries which could not increase their prices. That is the considered opinion of a professor of economics dealing with taxation. Therefore I say it behoves the Government of this State and all other Governments to endeavour to reduce the burden which is placed upon the primary producer, who is not in a position to pass any of it on. Let us give consideration to the fact that before the amendment of the Land and Income Tax Act the amount raised by the State Government by way of land tax was £70,879—that was in 1924—and that the last land tax, that of 1928, brought in £196,301, or an increase of £125,422. It is plain that the farming community are paying a very considerable portion of the taxation even in this direction, and I repeat that they are not able to pass it on. I trust that the Premier and his Cabinet, when considering ways and means of utilising the £350,000, will bear in mind the need for relieving the primary producer of some of his burdens by exempting him from taxation where the income is derived from the utilisation of land, and for replacing him in the position which obtained prior to the amendment of the Land and Income Tax Act, when the

primary producer paid only one tax—the land or the income tax, whichever was the greater. I would also like the Government to consider the advisability of appointing an appeal board to deal with valuations for land tax and income tax. We know that the Taxation Department have appointed their valuers, who go out into the country and place their valuations upon lands. The local authorities are accepting those valuations for their purposes. Indeed, the Taxation Department are sending out an officer to assist road boards to defeat appeals by ratepayers against valuations. That is an unfair attitude for the Taxation Department to adopt. The average man is not in a position to fight either the Taxation Department or any other Government department in the law courts. As a result, I believe, many thousands of pounds of taxation are being paid annually which would not be paid if there were an appeal board before which the taxpayer could lay his case. Such boards exist in other parts of the world, and could be brought into being here with advantage to the taxpayer, who, after all, is the man we should consider most. It would be wise for the House to agree to the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the incidence of land taxation. Frequently members have made statements in the House indicating that an undue burden has been placed upon the primary producers. If such an inquiry were authorised, it is probable that much useful information would be collected and when placed before the House, it would enable members to arrive at an impartial decision when exercising their votes. I hope we shall have an opportunity to appoint such a select committee. I wish to draw attention to another avenue of revenue that has been exceedingly helpful to the present Administration. A statement appeared in the Press that sandalwood had diverted £40,268 into the revenue of the State. That very fact proves the wisdom of the introduction of the sandalwood legislation and regulations some time ago. I believe in giving credit where it is due, and Mr. Scaddan, when Minister for Mines, performed a useful function when he introduced the legislation I refer to.

Hon. G. Taylor: It did a great deal of damage to those who introduced it.

Mr. THOMSON: I am aware that Mr. Scaddan's action caused a great deal of criticism.

Hon. G. Taylor: And it was due, too.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, the action taken by Mr. Scaddan has since proved indeed profitable to the Treasury and of advantage to those engaged in the sandalwood industry. When we cast our minds back to the time when this question was discussed in Parliament, and contemplate the many pages in "Hansard" that were necessary to cope with the speeches of those who were opposed to the move, it must be admitted that we should pay a tribute to the Mitchell Government, and particularly to the then Minister for Mines, for having introduced that legislation. I notice that the revenue for departmental and other services has increased by £53,222, compared with the returns for 1928. Revenue was received for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1928, amounting to £1,602,548, while during the last financial year the revenue under the same heading amounted to £1,655,770. A considerable sum of money has been spent in connection with the group settlements. Frequently the question has been raised in this House as to the diversion of interest into revenue. I think it is admitted by the Government that they have taken into revenue the full amount of interest debited up against group settlement. Although the money cost but $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the full current rate of interest, less that percentage, has been taken into revenue. It would be interesting to know just how much interest and compound interest has been included under the heading of "departmental reimbursements." I am just wondering if we shall be able to ascertain the amount of interest debited to the group settlements and that taken into revenue when the Auditor General's report is made available to us. Last night we had placed before us a report dealing with the revaluation of some of the group settlement blocks. I shall quote from the figures that have been published in the Press, which, I take it, I can regard as approximately correct. Those figures show that the capitalisation of the 327 holdings dealt with amounted to £1,113,197, and now the valuation placed upon them is £379,775. That means that on the 327 holdings that have been revalued out of the total number of 1,742, a sum of £733,422 has been written off. We must endeavour to be just to all sections and therefore it must be agreed as inevitable, in connection with any large group settle-

ment scheme, that a considerable sum of money must be written off in due course. In my opinion the Mitchell Government must accept the responsibility for £244,474 of that amount seeing that that Government were in power during one-third of the period the group settlements have been in existence. It is logical and fair to say that the present Administration, seeing that they have been in power for two-thirds of the period, must accept responsibility for £488,948.

The Minister for Health: What were we to do? Were we to drop them altogether?

Mr. THOMSON: I congratulate the present Minister for Lands upon having faced the position. I wish to draw the attention of the House and of the people of the State generally to the fact that when the present Government came into office, a Royal Commission was appointed to go into the group settlement question exhaustively. The commission submitted a report to the House, but members were never given an opportunity to discuss it from the commissioners' point of view. The present Government must accept responsibility seeing that for three years while the present Agent General (Hon. W. C. Angwin) was in charge as Minister for Lands, no attempt was made to deal with the position. When the present Minister took charge, the attempt was made. For that reason I claim that the Government must be held responsible to the extent I have indicated. I want to be quite fair from that point of view. We must, of course, expect a considerable amount to be written off, and in speaking as I have done, I am not decrying or condemning the development of the South-West in any way. Perhaps I should draw attention to what is probably the worst instance of writing down. One holding in Group 43 was responsible for a capital expenditure of £7,704, on which there was accrued interest amounting to £1,932. The capital value now placed upon that block by the Valuations Board is £1,100.

The Minister for Railways: That was an amalgamated block.

Mr. THOMSON: The present value is not equal to the amount of accrued interest! It makes the position worse if the block is an amalgamated one.

The Minister for Railways: No fear!

Mr. THOMSON: It is worse, from the State's point of view. On that particular block there was a total indebtedness of £9,636 and now the total valuation has been

brought down to £1,100. It shows that we are faced with a very difficult position.

Mr. Sampson: Reappraisements have always been necessary in any big developmental scheme.

Mr. THOMSON: Quite so.

The Minister for Railways: It merely shows in this instance that the block should never have been taken up.

Mr. THOMSON: I am merely dealing with the position we are faced with to-day. I am not for one moment criticising the value placed upon the holding by the Valuations Board. To-day we have the Group Settlement Board in addition and despite all that has been done by that board, we have fewer group members than formerly. If I am wrong the Minister will be able to correct me when he speaks at a later stage but, so far as I know at present, while supreme power has been given to the Board, subject only to the Minister, the overhead expenses in Perth and expenses in other directions have not been reduced.

Mr. Sampson: Butter production has increased by leaps and bounds.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not dealing with that phase; I am prepared to admit that butter production has increased.

Mr. Sampson: To a wonderful extent.

Mr. THOMSON: We know that is the position. I am not dealing with that phase, but with the writing off of the money. In connection with the particular block I have referred to, close on £10,000 was spent on it, and yet in the opinion of the valuers it is to-day worth less by £360 than the accrued interest on it. In view of these facts, it is very pleasing to us, as a party, to know that the present Minister for Lands has given effect to a policy that we advocated right from the inception of the Group Settlement Scheme. We advocated placing the control in the hands of a board, and the present members of the Group Settlement Board are doing their work to the best of their ability. I do not say that mistakes are not made. To say that would be to state an absurdity. I recognise that the Group Settlement Board has to shoulder grave responsibilities and a heavy burden, just as the Valuations Board has to do as well. The Government were fortunate in being able to secure the services of the chairman, who will always give a fair deal to both the State and the settler. I am sure the other members of the Valuations Board are imbued with the same spirit. I am not in any way cavilling at

the reductions that have been made in the valuations, nor am I adopting the attitude of "I told you so." In view of the amount that has been written down in respect of the 327 blocks that have been dealt with so far, I consider we must get away from the present system of administration. When the Minister for Lands speaks, I am sure he will give us information regarding his intentions. For my part, I am convinced that we must get away from the present system of control from Perth and of control by field supervisors. These men, or many of them, are just as sincerely desirous of making a success in the group areas as are our wheat-belt people, and I want them to have every opportunity for working out their own destinies. Now that the values have been placed upon the blocks, I feel sure the result will be beneficial to the State. The member for Swan referred to the increased butter production. We are all delighted that the South-West and other parts of the State are responding so well to the use of superphosphate and that with the introduction of cows the prospects of the dairying industry are very satisfactory indeed. While there are quite a number of people who strongly object to what is known as the Paterson butter scheme, we cannot get away from the fact that the South-West, through that scheme, has benefited by the increased price received for butter fat. On a very low estimate that benefit means anything up to £35,000 or £40,000 per annum, and this State is not contributing one penny towards it; it is being borne by the producers in the Eastern States.

The Minister for Mines: Not by the producers, but by the consumers. What are you talking about?

Mr. J. H. Smith: Do you object to that?

The Minister for Mines: No, not altogether; yet I do object to the broad principle.

Mr. Sampson: You do not object to the principle of high duties.

Mr. THOMSON: I am quoting that to show we are deriving some benefit from the labours of the producers in the Eastern States. I hope the day is not far distant when we shall be able to produce the whole of our butter and other local requirements within the State. There is far too much money going to the Eastern States every year for commodities that could be and should be produced in Western Australia. I want to congratulate the Government upon having brought into effect quite a consider-

able number of the planks in our platform, planks the adoption of which we advocated in 1924 and again in 1927.

The Minister for Mines: Yet I have noticed bitter opposition to us and them from you and your party.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister is not correct in that statement. I am going to show that I have strongly supported these various things; because they were part of our policy and so I was anxious to see them put into effect. We certainly advocated that a board of practical men should be put in charge of group settlement. That has been done by the present Government. Then we advocated that a fair valuation should be placed on the holdings, so as to enable the settlers properly to carry on. Again that has been done by the present Government. We urged that greater publicity should be given to the affairs of the State. Here I am delighted to take an opportunity to pay a tribute to the excellent work being done by Mr. F. R. Mercer, the State publicity officer.

The Premier: I do not know what we should have done but for the advice given us by your party.

Mr. THOMSON: I am very glad that you accepted it. Recently Mr. Mercer was sent over to Melbourne by the Government. There he did excellent service for the State by his articles in the Press. Certainly he seemed to have a facility for getting in the Eastern Press a considerable amount of publicity for this State. Also he broadcast through the wireless a very interesting discussion upon the centenary festivities that are to take place here in September. I may also say that, judging from my own experience and from the views of people with whom I came into contact in the East, I found over there a new and quite different opinion as to the future of Western Australia. That has been brought about largely by the excellent work of our State Publicity Department.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not of the Government?

Mr. Sleeman: I thought it was the Country Party doing it all.

Mr. THOMSON: I should like to say here, as I said recently in the Press, that in my opinion it would pay Western Australia to open offices, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. The Premier last night, when replying to the debate on the Supply Bill drew attention to the fact that quite a large number of people were coming over here from

the Eastern States. May I say also that I know of a large number of people in the Eastern States looking for opportunities to invest their money and to better their own positions. I know of no State offering better opportunities to those desirous of improving their positions than does Western Australia. If we had offices in Melbourne and Sydney, I feel sure they would greatly benefit the State and would more than repay the Government any expenditure incurred in their establishment. I am very pleased to think that we as a party advocated the appointment of a publicity officer and the securing of greater publicity for Western Australia. We also thank the Government for having brought in an amendment of the Industries Assistance Board on the lines suggested by us and put up as part and parcel of our platform. The Minister for Health a little while ago said we never gave him a vote. On the many occasions on which he has required votes for his department he has never found me in any way unsympathetic towards him and his administration.

The Minister for Mines: Except on the Hospital Bill, the chief thing I wanted. You opposed that bitterly.

Mr. THOMSON: I did so because I and my party are opposed to any increased taxation—that again is one of the planks of our platform—until such time as we are satisfied that we are getting full value for the money being expended. Some of us are not quite satisfied about that. I am hoping that we may be able to get further planks of our platform adopted, such as the appointment of a public accounts committee, and the appointment of a public works committee from members of this House. This would enable us to give to the affairs of the State a little closer scrutiny than we can do to-day. Whilst allegedly we are in control of the affairs of the State, the Government are in absolute control because they have the majority in the House and can spend the money—I do not say waste it—in any manner they choose. It would be in the interests of the State if we could have those two committees. I want to commend the Government, and the Minister for Health in particular, on the establishment of country hospitals—which was another of the planks of our platform. Also in season and out of season we have advocated the handing over of metropolitan activities to

the people of the metropolitan area, that they should have a board of works and should be in a position to levy their own fees, exercise local control and, out of any profits, reduce the charges upon the public. The Premier, in reply to a recent deputation, said that he and his Government were favourably disposed towards that proposition. I saw that in the Press, and I hope the scheme will be brought into accomplishment one of these days.

The Premier: Are you sure you have not taken all these things from our platform, instead of our having taken them from yours?

Mr. THOMSON: No, we have not.

The Premier: Why, most of them were on our platform before your party were in existence.

Mr. THOMSON: This is the policy on which we went to the country in 1924 and again in 1927.

The Premier: Yes, but you have taken these things from our platform.

Mr. THOMSON: No, the statements made by the Premier in 1924 and 1927, if scrutinised, will show no reference to a large number of matters I have discussed and which to-day are in operation.

Mr. Panton: Since we are putting your policy into operation, why worry about shifting us?

Mr. THOMSON: The people will decide that. We think we could put them into operation to better effect than you have done. For there are restrictions. Take the metropolitan markets, another of our planks.

The Premier: We resumed the land for the markets in 1912.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course, but nothing was done.

The Premier: Because we went out of office before anything could be done.

Mr. Latham: The Country Party supported your Government in the proposal to establish the markets.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, we supported the Government in that regard. Had we been charged with the appointment of the trustees, we would have had more than one representative of the primary producers on that trust. Because those men who send their produce to the market are the men who have to pay interest and sinking fund on the cost of those markets.

The Minister for Railways: No, they get that out of the consumers.

Mr. THOMSON: Nothing of the sort. The consumer does not pay. It is the producer who pays for sending his stuff to the market, the commission on selling it, the auctioneer's charges—everything is debited up to the producer.

The Premier: To the buyer.

Mr. THOMSON: No, to the seller. The buyer does not pay anything at all.

Mr. Lindsay: If there happens to be a glut, the buyer gets what he wants for practically nothing, while the producer has to pay the cost.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope there will be no periods of glut, for if there is any section of the community that should get a reasonable price for commodities, it is the primary producers' section. I say again that we were entitled to more than one representative on the board of trustees.

The Minister for Railways. Whom do you mean by "we"?

Mr. THOMSON: The primary producers whom we here represent.

The Premier: Why, there are more farmers on this side of the House than there are on your side!

Mr. THOMSON: We claim that we represent the producers.

The Minister for Railways: Oh, of course.

Mr. THOMSON: We know whom we represent. We maintain that we have a rural policy.

The Minister for Railways: So have we, and a very successful one.

The Minister for Mines: Yours has been collared from ours.

Mr. THOMSON: I am glad the Minister is so optimistic as to think he can persuade the people that we have copied his policy.

Mr. Sleeman: Who had the policy first?

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think we should come down to policies and platforms just now.

Mr. Withers: You had better keep off them.

Mr. Panton: There will be no policy left for you soon.

The Premier: You will have to get out a new one.

Mr. THOMSON: Part of our policy was that we should have central Government offices. No doubt the Government will say they have already spoken about that, but we were the first to bring the matter before the public. The Government have now

appointed a committee to see if it is possible to select a site upon which central offices can be erected. I hope the Government will soon be in a position to present a report as to what can be done. Every member will agree that the present unsatisfactory housing of our departments in various parts of the city is far from economical, and must be unsatisfactory to Ministers as well as to the public.

Mr. Clydesdale: The Government House grounds should be the place.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope we shall receive a report from the committee before long. I wish now to deal with the 3,500 farms scheme.

The Minister for Mines: I suppose you inaugurated that.

Mr. THOMSON: No, we are not in a position to inaugurate anything.

The Premier: Surely you suggested it?

Mr. THOMSON: I will refresh the Premier's memory. This is culled from our policy speech delivered in 1927—

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 below Ongerup in the south, stretching out east far beyond the Esperance-Norseman railway, we have a large area of land suitable for settlement. We believe that the immigration scheme, 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 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.

I do not say that we inaugurated the 3,500 farms scheme, but I do say that at the last election ours was the only party definitely to put that forward as a concrete scheme. It is included in the 3,500 farms scheme. Let us be fair to each other, and admit that our section had the foresight to visualise what could be done with that large area of land now awaiting development. We can with justice claim that, though we are not in a position to bring to actual fruition any of our ideas, we had the foresight to foresee what could be done. I hope that every farmer who goes out there will make a success of his holding.

Mr. Withers: And will realise who made it possible.

Mr. THOMSON: The Federal Government, by virtue of the terms of the Financial Agreement, under which the money is made available, are responsible.

Mr. Withers: And those who took advantage of the opportunity.

Mr. Lindsay: Who would not take advantage of money at 1 per cent.? No other Government had the opportunity.

Mr. THOMSON: No other Government has had the opportunity to develop the State under such favourable conditions.

The Minister for Railways: Or have done their work so well.

Hon. G. Taylor: Or failed so ignominiously.

Mr. Pantou: Do not forget the Country Party.

Mr. THOMSON: The Country Party play their part, and will continue to do so. Parties may come and parties may go but the Country Party will go on for ever. In the Speech there is a statement that two survey parties are making investigations into the question of a 4ft. 8½in. railway gauge from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. If a Public Works Committee were in existence, and had to lay down a policy for the construction of railways, a project such as this would be examined by it before a decision was arrived at. According to the Speech a railway survey is being carried out from Southern Cross to Salmon Gums. That is news to me. It is an indication of the intention of the Government to construct a line from Southern Cross to Salmon Gums. That is at variance with the plans that were published in the Press showing the railway construction in those areas. I always thank God that the decision regarding a route does not rest with members of Parliament. When in a district there are three or four sets of persons each wanting the line to run in a different direction, the Parliamentary representative is in an unfortunate position. We have, however, an Advisory Board occupying a post of trust, and advising the Government where, in their opinion, railways should be built. I do not know whether the opinion of that board has been sought as to whether it is desirable to construct this line from Southern Cross to Salmon Gums. I should like to know whether that opinion has been obtained. The estimate of the cost of constructing a 4ft. 8½in. gauge railway from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle is not yet available. No doubt it will be submitted in due course. Between those points we have the

accepted gauge for Western Australia, namely, 3ft. 6in. This railway has served the whole of the requirements of the intervening country for the last 25 years. Apparently the Government are acquiescing in the survey of a line that will for the most part run parallel to the existing line, and will pass through districts that are already served by the 3ft. 6in. gauge railway. We are talking of opening up and developing a 3,500 farms scheme. To show that the Government have faith in it, and in the area between Southern Cross and Ongerup, right across to the Esperance-Norseman Railway, they are already surveying the line between Southern Cross and Salmon Gums. It seems contrary to the law of economics that we should be considering the tearing up of the present Kalgoorlie to Fremantle railway, when the proposed 4ft. 8½in. gauge railway could branch off from Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie, run southward, and then pass through portion of the new area that it is proposed to develop. It is estimated that our railways are costing us £5,000 a mile. Unless I am misinformed, this State will be asked to find only one-sixth of the cost of the wider gauged railway between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle. It is estimated that the line will cost £12,000 a mile. We are faced with the necessity for opening up and developing an area of land which is devoid of transport facilities, and yet it is proposed to waste money in constructing this railway in place of an existing one. My opinion is that the wider gauge railway should run from Kalgoorlie via Corrigin and Brookton, thus taking in routes already authorised. This could be done at a cost of £2,000 a mile, which would be the State's contribution, as against £5,000 which is the estimated cost of State railways. If we are forced to adopt the other scheme, we shall be acting in opposition to the law of economics and shall not be getting full value for the money expended.

The Minister for Railways: It brings other obligations with it.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes. Apparently the Government are acquiescing in the survey, because it has been mentioned in the Speech. If my suggestion were adopted, the Government could build a railway through the territory it is proposed to develop at a cost of £2,000 a mile. They are now proposing to squander a million and a half of money, for this is what it would cost to construct a railway parallel to the one which already

exists. Furthermore, this would have the effect of disrupting the whole of the railway service. A proposal was put forward and endorsed by Sir James Connolly.

The Premier: That is your policy, too?

Mr. THOMSON: I have here the map that appeared in the Press. I am only giving my own views, and endeavouring to draw attention to the waste of money that will be involved.

The Premier: Have you made any calculations as to the difference involved in the mileage?

Mr. THOMSON: No.

The Premier: It is 140 miles to the Norseman line.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not say we should go down as far as Norseman.

The Premier: And 70 miles to Salmon Gums.

Mr. THOMSON: The line could branch off at Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie and travel south on a parallel route as far as Corrigin and Brookton. The Brookton-Armadale line is already authorised, and the Government are anticipating constructing railways from Southern Cross to Salmon Gums.

The Premier: Such a line as you suggest would not replace that railway. It runs at right angles to it.

Mr. THOMSON: It would save a considerable amount and would pass along routes already authorised. It would prevent the waste of money involved in tearing up railways that are already supplying the requirements of districts between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle.

Mr. Corboy: It will touch practically none of the new settlers.

Mr. THOMSON: Oh yes, it will.

Mr. Corboy: I know.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member does not know; he only thinks he does.

Mr. Kenneally: interjected.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is always casting aspersions on other members. I know what I am talking about and I would not do what the hon. member suggested the other night when he advocated that we should reduce production and thus provide more work. I am expressing my own views and I hope some notice will be taken of them. Let me now deal with a matter that affects my own district.

The Premier: The new one or the old one?

Mr. THOMSON: Both.

The Premier: You are not obliged to refer to the new one yet.

Mr. THOMSON: This is not a joking matter so far as the settlers are concerned. When I first came into Parliament in 1914 the railway went out from Katanning only as far as Nyabing. Unfortunately owing to the war the extension that was then authorised was not carried out for a considerable time and very few of the original settlers were able to hang on. Ultimately, however, the extension was constructed from Nyabing to Pingrup and immediately production in that district advanced by leaps and bounds. Land was taken up and speaking from memory, between 60,000 and 70,000 bags of wheat were carried to Pingrup station last year. It inevitably follows that when people are a long way from the head of the line they have to battle under adverse conditions. That is the position now in many cases and the desire is to secure the extension of the railway to Lake Magenta. We have waited by way of deputation on the Government and we have put our case forward. I was fortunate enough to induce the Premier to visit that part of the State and see for himself what had been done there. He listened to what the settlers had to say, but the position to-day seems to be that, until the comprehensive scheme of railway construction is carried out, that part of the State will have to stand still. I am hoping that the Premier will yet see his way to submit for the consideration of Parliament this long-discussed and long-promised comprehensive scheme of railway construction. I think the Government are following the right lines in respect to that scheme, by which we may be able to develop the land in that part of the State. Still, hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and there are many settlers who have been battling out there for years. It is poor satisfaction to them to know that until such time as the comprehensive scheme is dealt with, nothing can be done. That is detrimental to the settlers and to the advancement of that part of the State. I trust, therefore, that we shall soon learn what is to be done. It is not fair to the settlers to keep them in the dark much longer and therefore I am hoping that an announcement will shortly be made and that the people concerned will be in the happy position of looking forward to the early construction of the railway. I would like to see the Premier submit a Bill for the construction of a line from Pingrup to Magenta because that line must eventually

become part of the comprehensive scheme. It is important that that part of the State should be developed. It is said that if you persistently ask you will ultimately gain your objective. The settlers concerned have been persistently asking for years, and I am hopeful that their efforts will soon be rewarded.

Mr. Corboy: If something is not done soon, many of them will have to leave there.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, and they are a fine type of settlers.

Mr. Corboy: I think the problem there is more a question of mileage.

Mr. THOMSON: The matter affects my old electorate as well as what will be my new one; it may safely be said to be fifty-fifty. When I was elected in 1914, the Ongerup district was very promising and the then Minister for Works (Mr. W. D. Johnson) when at the head of the line in 1911, promised the settlers that the extension would be carried out from Ongerup to Needilup as early as possible. Unfortunately the settlers of Ongerup went through a trying time, but that has been overcome and to-day they are in prosperous way. The same remark applies to those at Needilup. I certainly feel that some consideration should be given to this extension. When speaking on the Supply Bill last night, I dealt with the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook extension. That, too, is in a portion of my new as well as my old electorate. I wish to show the disabilities under which some of these people are labouring. Under the heading of "Pastoral" these remarks appear in the Governor's Speech.—"The development of the clover belt in the Great Southern and South Western portions of the State is having a marked influence in the development of the industry." That refers to the sheep industry. The settlers along the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook route were promised many years ago the early construction of the railway. I congratulate the present Government on having fulfilled their promise to authorise the construction of the line and I am hopeful that before they vacate office next year or later they will make a commencement with the work. I draw attention to the fact that many settlers took up that land on the promise of the early construction of the railway. Some of them are not very hopeful about the fulfilment of the promise and in certain instances the second generation are now ex-

pecting the line to be built. This railway is essential if we are to develop the clover belt and there is no gainsaying the fact right through the country through which the railway will run, clover will thrive and that in those districts where a few years ago they talked about one sheep to seven, eight, nine or ten acres, with top dressing now and the planting of clover, the result will be one, two and three sheep to the acre.

Mr. Marshall: They will be good men to be able to bring that about.

Mr. THOMSON: They are doing it and what I have said can be supported by evidence. The position is that super is necessary for the establishment of pastures in that part of the State and on the subject of super I wish to give an illustration as it was submitted to me by a settler, a man who is 25 miles from Cranbrook. His cartage cost him £2 10s. 0d. That is, he has to pay 1s. a mile to and from the railway. The cost of super is £4 16s. 6d. and the railway freight is 7s. 10d., making a total of £7 14s. 4d. Take the settler who is only seven miles from the railway. His super costs £4 16s. 6d., his railway freight is also 7s. 10d. and cartage 14s., a total of £5 18s. 4d. The minimum quantity that will enable a man to obtain the cheap super rate is six tons and on his eight tons of super he has to pay additional cost. Thus he is more fortunate than his neighbour who is only 10 miles away. The amount of £10 16s. represents top dressing for 62 acres and that means, with one sheep to the acre, an average of 62 sheep. If this is not possible through lack of capital, we have a loss of £62 to the State, and of course a loss to the settler as well. I am hoping that when the Premier meets the deputation from that part of the State next week, he will be in the happy position to be able to say that he can see his way clear to provide funds for the construction of the line. That line will prove a great boon to the settlers. It certainly is essential to the development of that area. It will also assist in the development of the Wilga coal field and will place Albany in a better position than it occupies to-day, enabling it to bunker coal for overseas ships. Then there will also be some timber traffic along that line and we should be in the happy position of exporting that commodity from the areas that will be served by the railway. In fact, it

will assist every district through which it will pass and will be the means of providing additional freights for the Commissioner of Railways and benefit the State generally. It would also provide work for the men who are unemployed. I am sorry that the Government are not in a position to adopt the scheme they put into operation last year. The Treasurer doubtless will say that he is quite in sympathy with the request but that he is not in a position to supply the funds. There is a considerable number of unemployed in the country districts as well as in the city, and there is a desire on the part of many country road boards that the Government should renew the offer of last year to provide a pound for pound subsidy for certain approved works. I believe this proposal would go a long way to relieve the present unfortunate tension. Of course, it is necessary to recognise that there must be a certain amount of seasonal unemployment. Still, my object is to suggest ways by which the Treasurer may expend money to provide employment. Doubtless his greatest difficulty is to find the money to provide employment, for I am satisfied he has received plenty of suggestions as to how money could be profitably applied. I hope the Government will give serious consideration to the question of constructing the railways I have enumerated.

The Premier: That would be two railways for one seat.

Mr. THOMSON: They are not all in my district. One would go into the Yilgarn district so that would be fifty-fifty. The extension of the Pingrup line to Needilup would also be fifty-fifty. Coming to the proposed Boyup Brook-Cranbrook line, part of it would be in Albany, part in Katanning and part in the Nelson district.

The Premier: Then there is the Jurien Bay line.

Mr. THOMSON: I will leave Jurien Bay to the member for the district.

Mr. Ferguson: If the Premier will allow it, I will get that line built for him.

Mr. THOMSON: No doubt it would be built speedily if the Premier gave permission. In referring to the excellent work of the Agricultural Bank, I have no desire to embark on a fishing expedition to ascertain the effect of the Government's rural bank proposals, but the Agricultural Bank conditions could be considerably improved. The Minister for Agriculture, in the course of a speech at a dinner tendered to him, spoke most optimistically about the future

of the farming industry. Just prior to that many farmers had been just a little doubtful as to whether they would be able to put in their crops. I do not take any exception to the policy of insisting upon aid being given to crop only fallowed land. I recognise that in certain districts the grant and the super assistance proved most useful, but the aid was extended to certain districts only. The functions of the Agricultural Bank should be enlarged to permit of short-dated loans being granted. Under the present system the bank grants an advance for a certain amount of work. While the work is in progress the settler can obtain a draw, and when the work has been completed he receives payment of the balance. That, however, is not of much help to the settler who is not in a position to obtain finance elsewhere. The Agricultural Bank holds first security, and therefore it is thoroughly safeguarded. There are certain firms who occasionally assist the settlers, for instance by supplying super, but it is estimated that assistance in that way costs the settler anything up to 20 per cent. Thus the man who requires assistance most of all is the man who is called upon to pay most for the assistance granted. I cannot see why there should be any objection to the Agricultural Bank granting short-dated loans. If the bank made an advance in the shape of an overdraft, the settler could pay cash for his super, purchase his machinery parts, etc., and save a considerable amount of money.

The Premier: That would be increasing his indebtedness to the bank when the bank has already gone as far as it is safe to go.

Mr. THOMSON: That is not so. If a man has land on which 30s. per acre has been paid for clearing, he must have had to provide some funds of his own. A while ago a young Englishman who had a block of land went out to work and saved £150. He thought he was a millionaire, but he soon found that the whole of his savings had gone. Unable to develop his block any further, he has again undertaken outside work in order to save a few pounds more. If that young fellow had been granted a short-dated loan to enable him to do a bit of fallowing and put in a crop, there would have been a certain amount of security for the loan, though I admit there would have been some risk. At present, however, the Government are asking the merchants and storekeepers to take a risk that they themselves will not take, notwithstanding that the Agri-

cultural Bank has the first security. I have to thank the Minister for Lands for assistance granted in the shape of super. When he visited my district with Mr. Sutton, and with Mr. McLarty and Mr. Cook of the Agricultural Bank, and saw the wonderful development in the Kojonup-Muradup district as the result of the application of super, it was decided to alter the policy of the bank and grant assistance for the establishment of pastures. So far as this policy goes, it is excellent, but it does not go far enough. It is all very well to assist a settler to put in a certain amount of clover and do a certain amount of topdressing, but if he is going to establish his pastures, he must topdress in the second year. If he were given an additional advance for super in the second year, it would give him a chance to repay his loan, but if the pastures do not develop as a result of being denied the second topdressing, he cannot carry the requisite stock or make the advancement that he should do. Greater assistance should be given in this direction. In the Premier's absence the Acting Premier kindly received a deputation and gave us a sympathetic hearing. We are grateful for what the Government have done, but we would have liked the officials to go a little farther. It is a remarkable fact that at one stage early in the year a large number of settlers were desirous of obtaining super but the merchants could not supply them, and the private banks and the Government were sitting back. Not until all parties got together were they able to arrive at some scheme for granting assistance. To the Government's action in making available super for settlers in need of it will be due, I feel sure, a great deal of the 50,000,000 bushel harvest that we hope to gather next season. Much has been done by every Government to assist our primary industries. I congratulate the present Government on having followed the precedent established by Lord Forrest and observed by each successive Government. Western Australia is a primary producing State and, unless its primary industries are developed, we shall find ourselves in a very bad position. I believe it is being brought home more clearly to the city people how important our primary industries are and, apart from the producers, no section of the community is more anxious about the prospects of the season than that comprising the bankers

and merchants. A good season means that much money will be put into circulation. We in Western Australia, faced with the prospect of such an excellent season, have much to be thankful for.

Mr. Kenneally: Due to good government.

Mr. THOMSON: The Government claim credit for many things and, while they may claim credit for the good season, I would certainly give the credit to the Almighty. However, no one rejoiced more than did the Treasurer when the rain came, for the prospect of obtaining a good harvest means so much to him.

Mr. Lindsay: The people of East Perth were complaining that it was too wet.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, and that they could not play football on Saturday. When we consider the unfortunate position of settlers in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, we in Western Australia have much to be thankful for. I am delighted that, in the terms of the Speech, the mining prospects are encouraging, and I trust there will be some substantial development. As a resident of 36 years I do not forget the debt of gratitude we owe to gold-mining for setting the State on the high road to prosperity. The gold-mining industry has suffered many vicissitudes, and it has certainly suffered more than has any other primary industry from the high protection policy of Australia. I am glad that the prospects are brighter and I echo the sentiments expressed that the Wiluna and other mines will prove all that is hoped for them, and that an era of prosperity for mining is at hand. If I may again dare to deal with our policy, I should like to refer to one portion and to thank the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies for certain things referred to in the Governor's Speech.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMSON: I desire to congratulate the Minister controlling agricultural water supplies. Again I am gratified that this party's policy is being carried into effect. A definite policy of water conservation in dry areas means an extension of the goldfields water scheme wherever practicable. We would like to see the new settler receive some slight reduction of water rates under conditions somewhat similar to those appertaining to land rents and taxation in new districts over a period of years. We

also support the Minister in his explanation of the equipment of district water supplies where suitable catchments are available. I believe that policy is being given effect to in connection with the 3,500 farms scheme. The Government should, as far as possible, provide dam sites on blocks as part and parcel of the survey.

The Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies: We have no right to encroach upon any land selected.

Mr. THOMSON: It should be part and parcel of the scheme. Inexperienced men have sometimes put a dam on the wrong site.

Mr. Lindsay: And so have the Public Works Department.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, on many occasions. When the surveys are being made, it would be reasonable and practical for the surveyor, with his instruments, to select and mark one or two suitable sites for dams. This would be a distinct advantage to many inexperienced settlers.

Mr. Mann: A good catchment might not be good holding ground.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so, and there again the experienced departmental officer could advise the new settler advantageously from both points of view. Now I turn to road construction. The amount provided for that purpose this year is £1,250,000, or £599,202 in excess of what was expended last year. Some Ministers have said by way of interjection that they have nothing to reply to so far. I hope that when addressing the House they will be able to explain why the programme of road construction has increased by approximately 100 per cent. Undoubtedly it is essential that we should utilise the Federal subsidy to the fullest extent. However, while the Commonwealth have safeguarded their part of the agreement by insisting that contracts shall be called, the Minister for Works has somewhat overridden the intentions of Parliament in regard to country road boards. During the extraordinary session the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) asked what were the conditions applicable to men seeking employment, and he received the following reply:—

All men for Government work must be engaged through the Labour Bureau, and in selecting men for this work preference is given as follows:—(a) Financial members of trade

unions; (b) men with dependants in Western Australia, according to the number of their dependants; (c) men who have been longest out of work.

We recognise that that is a policy adopted by the Government, but in our opinion it is a wrong policy, even though the Government are able to give effect to it. In fact, the Minister is really overriding the Arbitration Court in connection with road construction in country districts, and is also overriding the authority of the Main Roads Board, a body which Parliament intended to be free from political control. I shall now read what appears in a weekly publication.

Mr. Lambert: What publication is it?

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member can accept it from me as being fairly correct.

Mr. Lambert: We have a right to know. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, are we not entitled to know the authority which the hon. member is quoting?

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the hon. member object to giving the name of the paper?

Mr. THOMSON: I shall be only too pleased to supply the name later on. If it is the desire of the House that that should be done now, I have no objection.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think it is only right.

Mr. THOMSON: I have no desire to evade the issue, Sir. I am about to quote from the "Western Worker" of the 26th July. I assume that one may reasonably accept the statements of that paper as being correct. I find here the following remarks by Mr. A. J. Watts, Branch Secretary of the A.W.U.:—

I feel confident in saying that if it had not been for the Federal Government demanding that the Main Roads Board must call for tenders in open contract, we—

That is, the A.W.U.

—would have materially increased our membership by at least another 600 or 700 members. The country roads boards have been successful in numerous instances with their tenders. Local men have secured the work, whilst scores of others have accepted piece-work in the way of sub-contracts, and in doing so have violated the hours, the wages, and holiday concessions won by the union members.

According to this report, one is not to be permitted to take a contract, or try to get out of the ruck, or do a little bit more than under ordinary conditions.

Many of the men employed would not think of joining the union. The Minister for Works (Mr. Alex. McCallum) must be given credit for the fight he has put up with the Federal Government to maintain the union rates and conditions on main road contracts, and it behoves every man to see that he gets those rates. During the past month the union has been able to collect a fair amount of money for membership through the action of the Minister.

That is not in accordance with the traditions of government in this State. Certainly the conditions imposed upon country road boards by the Minister in overriding the Arbitration Court do not tend to reduce the cost of production or to increase employment. Those conditions are embodied in the specifications to which the country road boards have to do their work of construction and maintenance. They are conditions not laid down by the Main Roads Board, but undoubtedly included at the direction of the Minister for Works. Forty-four hours being the result of an agreement made between the Minister and the union, he lays it down as a condition that the labourer must be paid £4 5s. per week, plus 2s. on account of the basic wage, and plus 6s. district allowance. The existing award does not apply to country road boards; yet the Minister is insisting upon the observance of those conditions, which are not in accordance with the award. The 6s. per week district allowance is an additional tax upon the revenues of the State, and one which is unjustified, seeing that there are scores of men in the country districts who are desirous of obtaining work. One of the troubles with which we are faced to-day is high costs, including the high cost of living. How can we reduce costs in general, or the cost of living, if we adopt a policy such as that instituted by the Minister for Works in overriding an arbitration award? Again, if we adopt the policy enunciated by the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) the other evening, that to reduce production and work fewer hours will create more employment—

Mr. Kenneally: That is untrue.

Mr. THOMSON: It is the statement that appeared in the Press.

Mr. Kenneally: It did not appear in the Press, either.

Mr. THOMSON: I believe I read it there.

Mr. Kenneally: The hon. member read it in his usual biased way.

Mr. THOMSON: By stopping work we were to become prosperous. Let me point out the conditions imposed in the country. Those developing our lands to-day do it under much more expensive conditions than pertained to the period before the war.

Mr. Panton: Does not that apply to everything?

Mr. THOMSON: We are prepared to admit that the price of everything has increased materially. However, we are faced with the position that the State of Western Australia and the Commonwealth as a whole will not be brought into a condition of prosperity by the policy I have described. Instead of forcing up the cost of everything, as has been done, we should rather aim to reduce the cost of production and increase the amount of wealth that can be produced in the State.

Mr. Sleeman: And lower the wages.

Mr. THOMSON: And reduce the cost of living. Thus we shall be able to find more work and do away with the appalling conditions obtaining to-day. Let members consider the position of people in the country districts to-day. A man may be desirous of erecting a home for himself there. People in the city can get their homes erected and the workmen on the job will be paid the prescribed rates. If a man in the country desires to have his home erected, he has to pay 5s. a day, or 30s. a week, on top of those rates, because the workers are away from home. Thus people who are not in a position to pass on these increased costs are being loaded up day by day in consequence of such actions by the unions and, in this particular instance, by the Minister. They should realise that in the long run these additional costs and extra charges are merely detrimental to the workers themselves. I would repeat what I urged last session after I returned from abroad. I reiterate that it is high time the leaders of the Labour movement returned to sanity, and endeavoured to assist in the development of the country rather than take such actions as result in retarding its progress.

Mr. Sleeman: Yes, get down to coolie conditions!

Mr. THOMSON: I want to again emphasise the point that in consequence of the actions of those who are now interjecting, a firm that was desirous of manufacturing agricultural machinery in Western Australia was prevented from doing so.

Mr. Panton: You gave us that 12 months ago.

Mr. THOMSON: And I repeat it now, because it is pregnant with significance.

Mr. Panton: That is a matter of two years ago now.

Mr. Sleeman: If your people patronised the firms that are already in existence, more men would be employed.

Mr. THOMSON: I will again place the facts before the people.

The Minister for Works: Are you going to read your own speech now?

Mr. THOMSON: I am going to refer to it.

The Premier: You are the only member of Parliament who quotes his own speeches! Your remarks at this stage need not be printed, as they are already in "Hansard."

Mr. THOMSON: That is how the Premier deals with an important question that bears heavily upon the people of this State!

The Premier: This is the modesty of the man!

Mr. THOMSON: The Government are forcing up the cost of production in every direction. I shall show that by their very actions and the actions of those behind them, they have caused loss to the people of this State. I quoted the figures last year to show what would have been saved had the unions and the Government permitted the establishment of works here by McKay Bros. Ltd.

The Minister for Railways: We have had that about six times now; give us something new!

Mr. THOMSON: As I pointed out previously, the workers lost something like £157,189 that would have come to them as wages. They lost that because they refused to allow their fellow workmen to engage under piece-work conditions. The secretary of the A.W.U. objects to workers in the country districts taking on jobs at piece-work rates, which would enable them to earn a little more money. He insists upon the men working under conditions that the union prescribes. Not only did their action mean the loss of £157,189 in wages, but the unions loaded the machinery available to the farmers of the State to the extent of £132,000. We have unemployed men here to-day. Probably some of them are capable of going into a machinery shop and earning an honest living, but they have been deprived of that opportunity. To-day the housewives are begging for food so that

they can feed men who are hungry and are unable to secure work. Deputations have waited upon the Government and still there are men in Perth who are desirous of securing work, but are unable to find it. Yet, forsooth, we have a party in power whose policy it is to say to these men who desire work and cannot get it, "We will give you preference of employment provided you belong to a union. We will not allow you to work under piece-work conditions, even if you want to do so, if we can prevent it!" Then again we have in office a Minister who has forced his policy upon the country road boards. Much of the work that is being done by the local authorities at present is on the maintenance of subsidiary roads. While the local authorities are pleased to have the advantage of the financial assistance that is available from the Federal Aid Roads Grant, which means the expenditure of an average of £2,000 in each district, they resent the conditions that have been imposed upon them by the Minister and which, I believe, are contrary to the law.

Mr. Lindsay: Have the Federal Government agreed to those conditions?

Mr. THOMSON: No, but the Minister has forced his policy on the local authorities, without even the authority of the Arbitration Court. The Government are wrong in the policy they have adopted of forcing their conditions upon the country road boards. It will be interesting to note the attitude the road boards will adopt when they come to discuss that particular phase. I find that during my absence last session the Minister for Works charged me with making a statement in this House regarding the Esperance railway. I will quote the Minister's remarks because the member for York (Mr. Latham), in my absence, produced the minutes of the "Industrial Gazette," which I had looked up and upon which I based my remarks. I have pointed out repeatedly in this House that the policy of the Country Party is in favour of contract work. We believe in tenders being called in order to have an opportunity to check the costs of various departments. It was an amazing thing that as soon as the Federal Government compelled the present Administration to call for tenders for road construction, in accordance with the terms of contract under the agreement, the price of road construction was reduced very materially. That is what was disclosed by

a statement that appeared in the Press. Therefore there is justification for the attitude the Country Party adopt when we stand for the contract system in preference to the present conditions imposed upon the industries of the State by the present Minister for Works. I am not attacking him personally, but the policy of the Government of which he is a member. After the member for York had been good enough to place certain particulars before the House on my behalf, relating to the plate-layers' award in connection with the Norseman-Salmon Gums railway construction, the Minister made the following statement in reply—

The statement made by the Leader of the Country Party was that the union had forced on the Government a policy of railway construction that would not admit of more than half a mile being laid per day; that the Government had submitted to the dictation of the union, and that the Esperance line had been constructed on that basis.

Unfortunately I was absent at the time, but the fact is that I made no such statement at all. What I said was this—

Let me deal with the railways under construction. When the Norseman-Salmon Gums railway was being extended towards Esperance, a strike occurred and a condition imposed upon the department by the union secretary was that only half a mile of rails per day should be laid.

The Minister for Works: That is what I accused you of.

Mr. THOMSON: No, you put a totally different construction upon my statement. You said I had stated the union had forced the policy on the Government, whereas I referred to the department.

The Minister for Works: And who does the department represent?

Mr. THOMSON: Apparently, in this instance, the Minister, and the Minister imposed the conditions.

The Minister for Works: Not the Government?

Mr. THOMSON: I also said—

I am informed that that rule, if it can be so called, is in existence to-day.

The Minister for Works: That is what I accused you of.

Mr. THOMSON: You did not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. THOMSON: That is what the hon. member did not accuse me of. I will read

the statement that was made by the President of the Arbitration Court in connection with the dispute. He said—

On the 16th August last a number of men engaged in platelaying on the construction of portion of the Norseman-Esperance railway line ceased duty, the reason being that the engineer in charge intended to carry on the work of platelaying at the rate of three-quarters of a mile per day instead of half a mile per day, which was the rate at which progress was being made by the men up to about the time of the dispute. The men, through their agent, Mr. Costello, claimed that it was unreasonable that the increased rate should be adopted even by the addition of a number of other men to the working gang, on the grounds that certain of the men, known as "linkers-in," in the increased gang would be required to do more than their fair share of the work, and also on the grounds that the custom had been established among platelayers in Western Australia that the laying of half a mile of rails per day should constitute a day's work. Negotiations took place between the Minister for Public Works and the Australian Workers' Union representing the men, but no agreement was arrived at. A compulsory conference, under the provisions of the Act, was held in Perth on the 15th September, 1926, and as a result of that conference an agreement was arrived at that work be resumed immediately on the basis of half a mile of platelaying per day . . .

The Minister places an engineer in charge of the construction of the railway, and he should be responsible for the work. On the other hand, the Minister practically over-rides that officer and allows himself to be dictated to.

The Minister for Works: I am in charge of the Public Works Department; no one else.

Mr. THOMSON: With all due respect to the Minister, I contend that if he is to do justice to this State, it is not fair to an officer placed in charge of such construction works, that the Minister shall interfere with him and tell him that he must carry out the work under certain conditions.

The Minister for Works: Nonsense! What is the Minister there for?

The Minister for Justice: I do not understand what you mean by "interference."

Mr. THOMSON: In this instance there was interference by the A.W.U. through the Minister.

The Minister for Works: I am paid to carry out my duty.

Mr. THOMSON: In my opinion the Minister did not carry out the duty for which

he was paid, nor did he look after the interests of the State.

The Minister for Works: Well, read on that statement. What was the verdict?

Mr. THOMSON: The statement continues—

A compulsory conference under the provisions of the Act was held in Perth on the 15th September, 1926.

The award was given exactly ten weeks after that compulsory conference took place. This is the agreement that was arrived at. The Minister went out of his way to accuse me of misleading the public, but I propose to show that the statement I made and which is reported in "Hansard" is fully substantiated here. As I have read, a compulsory conference under the provisions of the Act was held in Perth on the 15th September, 1926. As a result of that conference an agreement was arrived at. That was an agreement between the Minister and—

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: At the compulsory conference it was agreed that work should be resumed with the platelaying going on at the rate of half a mile a day. I stated that the railway had been carried on and practically completed at that rate.

The Minister for Works: Entirely wrong. You read the verdict.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister contradicted me.

The Minister for Works: And I will contradict you again.

Mr. THOMSON: On the 15th September that compulsory conference was held in Perth and it was agreed that platelaying should be carried on at the rate of half a mile a day until certain matters had been decided. The President, on the 22nd November, spoke to the minutes of the award. There was a period of ten weeks between the compulsory conference and the giving of the award. I understood from the Press reports—

The Minister for Works: Be fair and read the decision. Be honest.

Mr. THOMSON: For ten weeks that railway was constructed at the rate of half a mile a day.

The Minister for Works: That is a squibby statement. Read the decision.

Mr. THOMSON: I understood from the Press that the railway was almost completed when the strike took place. So for ten weeks that railway was constructed at

the rate of half a mile a day. It only goes to show that the statement I made was perfectly correct.

The Minister for Works: There was not a word of truth in it. You have not the courage to read out the verdict of the court.

Mr. THOMSON: I have the courage to stand up to you.

The Minister for Works: Yes, the courage to repeat a mis-statement.

Mr. THOMSON: It is not a mis-statement. I desire that that be withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! What is it the hon. member would have withdrawn?

Mr. THOMSON: I made a statement which is substantiated by the evidence.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not sure that the Minister is not quite right in saying that the hon. member is making a mis-statement. It is perfectly legitimate from the Minister's standpoint if in his opinion the hon. member is making a mis-statement regarding his department.

Mr. THOMSON: I have read out from this report—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not go over the same ground again. The point has been decided.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister would have me read—

The Minister for Works: You will get it in the neck when I start on you.

Mr. Latham: The Minister has no right to threaten.

Mr. THOMSON: I feel that the action of the Minister in over-riding the local authorities and compelling them to comply with conditions not in accordance with the Act is wrong and is a misuse of the position he occupies. I regret that one has to deal with the question in this manner, because one has to do his duty. I am not afraid of the Minister. I have a duty to perform, and I am going to do it so long as I am here. If we are to reduce our costs and if we are to provide employment for men, we shall have to adopt a different policy and different methods from those that obtain in the Public Works Department. I trust the Government will use their influence with the Imperial Government to see that they do not put into effect what they are suggesting, namely, the withdrawal of Imperial preference.

The Premier: What do you think of the situation in China?

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with Imperial preference and with the position which, if the Imperial Government put into operation what they are suggesting, will have a very serious effect on one or two industries in Western Australia. To-night we have discussed portion of a report dealing with group settlement. A provision of that migration agreement is that we are to take a certain number of our kinsmen from overseas. For my part I should say the more we get the better. But it is not going to be very much use to us if we are to accept the responsibility of taking those people and welcoming them, and if when we produce the commodities and are desirous of selling them we are not able to sell them on a market that we have looked upon as being one where we should have generous treatment. It is going to have a very serious effect on our dried fruits industry. Just now we are very proud of the progress being made by the butter industry, and we are hoping the day is not far distant when we shall be able to export our commodities. But if we are not going to have that preference we have enjoyed in the past, it will seriously affect quite a number of people in this State. In the opinion of some members of our board, the existing Vermin Act, under which those in the settled areas are contributing a considerable amount to eliminate pests in other districts not so closely settled, seriously requires amending. A suggestion has been put forward which I hope will be noted and if possible adopted. It is that the Act should be amended to provide for the appointment in certain areas of expert dog and fox trappers. It is felt that under existing conditions very serious damage is being done to stock. Only yesterday there was brought under our notice the experience of one man, living quite close to a town, who in two nights lost 22 sheep, presumably through the depredations of one dog. People in the district would willingly pay a substantial bonus for the capture of that dog. It is felt that if there were in various districts expert trappers, retainers could be paid to them and special fees would be subscribed by local people in special instances.

The Premier: Would that not be settling up another State enterprise?

Mr. THOMSON: It is a State enterprise to-day, and we are paying substantially through the vermin tax while the people

who are suffering most are not getting the benefit. Now that the Premier is interested in farming, I want to assure him that if unfortunately he should meet with the same experience as my friend who lost 22 fine sheep, he will realise that something could be done by having an expert trapper in his district. A question repeatedly asked by the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) contemplates an amendment of the Hire Purchase Agreement Act. Something should be done in the interests, not only of those who have entered into such agreements, but also of the outside public. The present position is very unsatisfactory, and we are told that we can take the conditions or leave them. Under an ordinary bill of sale notice has to be given before it can be registered. It is time that some similar procedure was adopted for the registration of hire purchase agreements. There is also a further phase seen in the position of a man who, having purchased a machine and paid quite a number of instalments, is not able to complete them. The machine is repossessed, but he is held responsible for the full payment, notwithstanding that he has lost his machine. I commend to the Minister for Justice the Canadian Act, which has been submitted to his department by the member for Avon. For nearly 10 years this matter has been brought up time and time again. While I have been criticising the Minister for Works over some of his actions, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Premier for having practically fulfilled his promise—the plans are prepared—to provide for the town and district of Katanning suitable public buildings to replace the existing structure which, as the Premier realises, is totally inadequate to the requirements of the district. As far as possible and without fear or favour, we should endeavour to increase the production of Western Australia; because the more we can increase production, the more work shall we be providing for the people. If only we can get a true spirit of co-operation, I feel sure the prospects of Western Australia will be brighter than ever before. Thank God, apparently we are going to have a good season. If we get the season we anticipate, and the estimated quantity of wheat, I believe the Minister for Railways after the next harvest will be able to tell a very different story when he submits his yearly balance. We as a party are only too willing and anxious to

co-operate with the Government in doing the very best we can to make this State progress, and to see that work is provided for everyone who wants it. People, however, must be willing to work when employment is offered to them. Whilst we may differ, and differ materially, upon matters of policy, I think it is the desire of all sections of the community to see that Western Australia goes ahead and flourishes, and that employment is available to such an extent that no person need go without it.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.16 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 1st August, 1929.

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

QUESTION—RETIRING ALLOWANCES AND PENSIONS.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM asked the Chief Secretary: What was the amount of (a) retiring allowances, and (b) pensions paid by the Government during the financial year ended the 30th June last?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: For year ended 30th June, 1929—(a) £1,436 5s. 8d.; (b) £64,107 13s. 1d. The additional information requested yesterday by the hon. member is not available to the State Government, it being Commonwealth expenditure.