

standing circumstances which might well excuse the Government for some delay, considerably earlier than at any other time, except once, in the last eight years. So I do not think it is fair that the hon. member should ask for details when he knows that the only way in which those details can be presented is through the Estimates.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What I meant was that, in view of the circumstances of our finances, we ought to have some information.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that there is any information I can give to hon. members. We are not launching out in any new avenues of expenditure. If hon. members will study last year's Estimates it will give them a good idea of the way in which the money is going. There is nothing fresh contemplated.

Hon. J. Nicholson: No new departures?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No new departures, of course. Any new departures the Government contemplate will be duly submitted to Parliament. I entirely agree with the sentiments of Mr. Clarke, who said that it would have been well for Western Australia if Governments of the past had confined themselves to the proper functions of Government instead of entering upon various trading concerns. However, I do not know that at the present juncture we are able to jettison those trading concerns in the light-hearted manner suggested by Mr. Clarke. There is on the statute-book a measure which prevents the sale of any of the State trading concerns without the consent of both Houses of Parliament. That measure suggests great difficulties in the way of the disposal of those concerns, and even if it did not, I think that at the present time, particularly while the war profits tax remains, a measure which in its incidence is frequently unjust, it would be impossible to induce people to purchase any of the larger State trading concerns. And the Government take the view that while they have to carry them on, they have to do the best they can. But the Government are in no way enamoured of the State trading concerns.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Then why are they starting others?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that the Government are starting others. The Government are lending money to co-operative concerns to establish certain industries, and I venture to say it will be a very bad thing for Western Australia unless some measure of success attends those efforts to establish industries in this State; because, although some of the metropolitan members, I know, are rather inclined to think that the Government ought not to spend money in this direction, yet I would remind them that we cannot live by taking each other's washing, and the great bulk of the community has to exist on the industries of the country. Therefore, if the Government can assist to establish industries for which the country is eminently adapted, I think it would be short-sighted policy on our part if we did not do it. To my mind Mr. Holmes put his finger on the crux of a difficult position. Here we have a community of 300,000 people faced with an almost impossible

task in carrying the burden of debt and keeping going a tremendous railway system and otherwise developing the country. That is one of the chief problems to which it will be necessary that Parliament and Ministers apply themselves, namely to the question of how the population can be increased. However, that is a matter which does not call for discussion on the present occasion.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and passed.

House adjourned at 8.40 p.m.

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## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 28th August, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

### NOTICE OF QUESTIONS.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to direct the attention of hon. members to the sessional order which was carried yesterday in accordance with which the Assembly will meet on each Thursday at 11 a.m. In view of that, it will be impossible for questions, notices of which have been given on Wednesday, to appear on the Agenda Paper for Thursday morning. In future these questions will appear on the Notice Paper of the following Tuesday and will be answered by Ministers on that day. Hon. members will also realise that it would not be possible for Ministers to furnish answers at such short notice.

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from Thursday, 22nd August.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.44]: It will be remembered that on the Address-in-reply last year the members of the Opposition refrained from participating in the debate, believing that by so doing we would assist the Government who had only a short time previously assumed office. We should have been

quite agreeable to adopt a similar attitude on this occasion if the public affairs of this country were in a condition other than that in which we find them at present. The position is that this State, particularly regarding the more important matters that concern the public welfare, has drifted into such a state of chaos during the past 12 months that in my view there is a responsibility cast upon, I believe, every member of this House, no matter on what side he may happen to be sitting, to give expression to his opinions. For my part, I have no desire, and do not intend, to criticise or attack the Government from any party political point of view whatever, and members on this side of the House intend this session, as we did last session, to adopt a truly national attitude on all matters of truly national concern. We should, however, be lacking in our duty and false to the best interests of this country if we remained silent at a time when there is so much need for comment. First of all, I want to emphasise my protest against the action of the Government in delaying the calling together of Parliament until practically seven weeks of the new financial year have expired. As I stated last night, when the Treasurer intimated that it was his intention to present a Budget statement to the House in July, I knew perfectly well that this was a matter of impossibility. If the Government desired to afford the House an opportunity of discussing the financial position of the country on the Budget debate at a period earlier than September, the House at least should have met before, not later than the end of July. In asking this I am not asking for something which the Government, of which I was a member, did not act up to during the five years that they were in office. I think that, with only one exception, we met Parliament prior to the termination of the financial year in order to obtain supplies in a proper constitutional manner to carry on the affairs of this country.

Mr. Thomson: Such as when you bought the "Kangaroo."

Mr. Troy: It is a pity we did not have half-a-dozen "Kangaroos."

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate we did not buy hon. members in the way that the Government have bought the hon. member.

Mr. Thomson: On a point of order, is the hon. member in order in stating that the Government have bought hon. members? I deny the statement that I have been bought by any Government. I desire that the hon. member should withdraw that statement that we have been bought by the Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I said the hon. member had been bought.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in attributing motives to the Government or members of the House, and as exception has been taken I trust he will withdraw the remark.

Mr. Holman: He is not worthy of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will withdraw but, before I conclude, I shall quote some other authority on the point of the purchase of members.

Hon. T. Walker: Kangaroos.

Mr. Holman: Rats.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was remarking that during the term of office of the Labour party we had met the House every year, I think, except once, in June. In our five years we met the House in July only once. Now we have the affairs of the country hung up until the end of August, with the full knowledge, having voted last night a sum of £1,431,000, nearly 1½ million, and given the Government a blank cheque, that we are not now in a position to discuss the question which transcends all others in importance, namely, that of the financial position of the State. Coming to the Speech itself I am constrained to say that it is a remarkable document. It contains length without breadth, depth without substance. One would be almost inclined to think that the Government were imbued by some malicious desire to test the physical endurance of His Excellency in his effort to reach the end of the Speech.

Hon. T. Walker: He did get a sore throat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A fitting termination to the Speech would have been for it to conclude with the words "To be continued in our next."

Hon. W. G. Angwin: We are going to increase the length of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Speech was merely a long string of commonplace stereotyped platitudes relative to or concerning little things of the State. Matters of comparatively trivial importance were contained in it, whilst it is practically silent on those matters upon which the people of this country are asking enlightenment. For instance, it tells us what the yield of the wheat harvest was last year—somewhere about nine months after the harvest has been gathered and the information published broadcast to the world. It was thought worthy of importance to fill up the Speech.

Hon. T. Walker: Without mentioning the weevils which have come since.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have a paragraph telling us that the Treasurers' conference had decided to appoint the Treasurer of Queensland and the Premier of New South Wales to draft a scheme for the amalgamation of Taxation Departments. That is a subject which has occupied the Press and the Parliaments of this country for years past, but it is brought up and introduced into the Governor's Speech. We are also told of such an important matter as that the Mines Department has equipped 34 returned soldiers with prospecting turnouts throughout the State, and, in addition to that, we are informed that the Minister for Mines is considering some scheme for the reorganisation, or the exercise of economy, with regard to the smelter at Ravensthorpe. Truly a national question to introduce into the Governor's Speech! The only thing lacking in it is that the Speech should have given the details as to the quantities and the variety of the tools with which these 34 prospecting parties were equipped. Co-operation of course, finds a place after the trouncing that the Government have received during recent weeks regarding their neglect of the principle of co-operation. Having regard for the powers behind the throne, it was to be expected that the Gov-

ernor's Speech would say that the Government were sympathetic towards the principle of co-operation, and would extend every possible support to it. I hope our friends of the Country party association will be satisfied with that. An admiring world is informed that the Bunbury breakwater has been extended, and has proved successful in mitigating the action of the winter gales. What the Government are most in need of is some kind of breakwater, some kind of shelter which will mitigate the cold west or east wind—from whichever direction it blows the colder—that is blowing upon their efforts and upon their party at the present time. Then we are told that the long standing difference between the orchardists and the Government in connection with the Harvey irrigation scheme has been settled on a basis equitable to all concerned. This is some little pettifogging dispute which has existed between the Water Supply Department and the settlers of the Harvey as to the payment of rates, but it is deemed of sufficient importance to occupy a place in the Governor's Speech.

Mr. Holman: Does it say nothing about meter rents at Kalgoorlie?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Whilst the Speech is padded out with questions of that description the one greater matter which concerns the people of this country, namely that of the finances, is dismissed with a single paragraph. This is the King Charles' head of the Government. It was necessary to pad it out with all these trivial matters in order that the fact that comparatively nothing is said about the finances should not be observed by the public. Even in the paragraph the Speech gives us the utmost detail. We are told that the revenue for the year was £4,622,535 12s. 3d. and the expenditure £5,328,278 18s. 9d. The public would have been terribly misled regarding that information if these odd pence had been omitted from the Speech. The whole Speech itself in bulk is monumental and in statesmanship is microscopic. Politically, we have fallen upon evil days indeed, for we have a Government in power which is heartily despised by a large section of the community and admired by none, not even its previous supporters. It is not, after all, astonishing that this should be so, when we have regard to the genesis of the Government, the means by which they came into existence. I, for one, am not surprised that they have failed so lamentably as they have done, because at their very birth and foundation they carried with them all the elements of disintegration. The motives that were behind the formation of this National Government were not so much that we might rise superior to party politics in this State, and pursue our course at a high national level, but the outstanding motive was the preservation of the political existence of many of those who formed the National party. A fortnight after the Federal elections, which took place in May, our friends opposite, when a wave of Nationalism had swept the poles from one end to the other, lost no time in calling a meeting, and at that meeting the Hon. Frank Wilson, who was then Premier, said that they ought to take advantage of the National sentiment, and take advantage of it they did. Things have pro-

gressed since. I have the platform as drawn up at the famous meeting and it occupies the space of the size of a postage stamp. It consists of six or seven planks, the final one of which is very interesting in the light of recent events. It reads—

A representative Government, free discussion by members of Parliament who shall be responsible only to their electors. Responsible only to their electors! We have had an exhibition recently as to how one section of members of the National party, at any rate, stands as being responsible only to its electors.

Mr. Pickering: You are wrong.

Mr. Munsie: They are responsible to the junta of St. George's terrace.

Mr. Pickering: That is not true.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At that particular time the Premier said that he did not want to "introduce into the National movement an element which would mean the domination of the junta in the control in Parliament. If there was one thing for which the national movement stood, it was that a member of Parliament, once he was elected, should be responsible to his constituents only." Let hon. members mark that—responsible to his constituents only. Now, what has happened during the past week or two? We have had an exhibition that is not to be paralleled in the history of this State.

Mr. Holman: Or of any other State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The imperial high king of the Country party, the Lloyd George of the farmers, spoke to the farmers a few weeks ago; and we then had the spectacle of Minister after Minister going down, in the greatest humility to offer explanations of his conduct in this House during the past twelve months.

Mr. Pickering: You see, we have open doors. You do not. We do not know what you do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; you are a rather unsophisticated lot, I admit.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: What did we see? Not the conference, not even the congress, but the president, the one great high king of the farmers, taking to task the two Honorary Ministers because they had not attended the executive meetings of the Association during the year. Taking them to task! And, as a result, we had the Country party members alarmed. They hastily convened a meeting upstairs of their own party, and insisted upon the poor unfortunate leader going down at once to offer explanations. The unfortunate man was dragged down on crutches. He had to present himself before that august tribunal on crutches.

Mr. Holman: They say the crutches were only to get sympathy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Country party are not possessed even of the ordinary instincts of humanity. The leader had to drag himself down there on crutches, and stand up on his crutches and give explanations of his conduct.

Hon. T. Walker: The party did not even supply him with a stretcher.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The president said that he had learnt that at this meeting, which insisted upon the leader's going down, he, the president, had been criticised in a most undignified way.

Mr. Pickering: You are not quoting him correctly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am quoting from the newspaper report. The newspaper report says that the president stated he had been criticised in a most undignified manner. He is also reported as saying, "I have been apologising for this party for the last five years, and if things do not alter the association will totter in its very foundations. Unless things are remedied, the association is doomed." Tottering in its very foundations because of the conduct of its representatives in this House! That was the only reason. This gentleman felt that he had reached his limit of apologising for the Country party's representatives in Parliament, after doing it for five years. And so the leader stands up and offers explanations. What does he say? So desperate was he to make a case for the work of his party in this House, that he actually claimed credit for everything that had been done in this Parliament during the last three or four years, claimed credit quite regardless of whether he or his party had had a hand in it or not, or were in any way responsible for it. To use the words of the Treasurer, the leader of the Country party felt that he was right up against it; and so he had to call to his aid everything done by Parliament that he thought might possibly assist him. He said the members of the party had been hard worked. If my testimony be of any value to those members, I will confirm that they have been hard worked. I know of no members who have worked harder. I willingly concede their industry and their attention to their duties. Their leader said that the members were commission agents. We do know that they have to be a sort of handymen in the City to their constituents, even if it comes to buying at times a pinafore for the child, or a tin whistle or a rattle for the baby. From that right up to the purchase of machinery, and attention to the farmers' other requirements with the City business people. But this is the first time I have had an intimation that those hon. members received commission for doing that work. I did not know that they were playing the part of commission agents, that they were drawing commission for the services they rendered to their constituents in that respect.

Mr. Griffiths: You do not believe that, do you?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot discredit the statement of the hon. member's leader. It is not for me to contradict what that leader says when placed upon his trial.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): I said, unpaid commission agents.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Acting in an honorary capacity?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Quite.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad to have the Honorary Minister in his seat. I thought I would get him round. He said that his mem-

bers gave Ministers no rest. Is it any wonder the Treasurer has a deficit? Rest in what respect? The reference is to the importunities of country members to Ministers, giving them no rest, harassing them day after day.

Mr. Jones: Hustling them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; and embarrassing them in the performance of their administrative duties. It is little wonder, therefore, that this State finds itself in its present position. The leader said that his party were responsible for the Lands Re-pricing Act, a measure which was introduced and passed by the Government of which I was a member. During that time we had a majority in this House, regardless and independent of the Country party. But, building, I suppose, upon the fact that the chap just down from the bush at the conference would not be *au fait* with all that occurs in these Chambers, the leader said, "We were responsible for the Lands Re-pricing Act." Let me tell the farmers concerned, whom he guiled with that statement, that neither the leader nor his fellow members had anything whatever to do with that re-pricing measure. If there is any credit to be taken for that measure—and presumably the hon. member thinks it is advantageous to the farmers—that credit belongs to the party with which I am associated.

The Colonial Treasurer: But I assisted you to get the measure through.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And you got into a row for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We had an independent majority in support of that Bill on our own side of the House. The leader of the Country party said that the party had reduced the price of poison lands, repurchased estates, and so on. He also said that, thanks to the party, payment of settlers' rents had been postponed, the Agricultural Bank had been instructed to be as lenient as possible in regard to the payment of interest, and political influence had been eliminated from the administration of the Agricultural Bank. The last statement is made notwithstanding the assertion, made just previously, that the manager of the Agricultural Bank had been instructed to be as lenient as possible in regard to the payment of interest. We are not surprised to learn that on the same day the conference carried a resolution protesting against political control of the Agricultural Bank, and instructing the party to introduce legislation making the management of the bank independent of, and removing it altogether from, political control. If that is done, the claim of the leader that he had caused instructions to be given the manager to be lenient in the matter of payment of interest, will not avail him very much. Further, the leader said he had heard no commendation of this relief, or of the relief given to the man on the land from the payment of double land tax arising out of the change of the financial year and amounting to £25,000. The hardihood of the hon. member! He is a member of the party which imposed that double income tax upon the farmer, and yet he takes credit to himself and his party for having removed the double tax again. It is equivalent to a man breaking into my house and robbing my safe, and when forced to bring back the

swag, expressing surprise that I do not give him commendation for his generosity in bringing back my property. The party which the hon. member leads, or was then supporting, passed legislation which imposed that double land tax upon his supporters, and it was only after the vigorous protest raised by this side of the House last session with regard to the retrospective nature of the income tax—a protest which, I admit, was supported by members on the other side—that the double impost was removed.

Mr. Maley: The point was not raised by your side of the House.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was.

Mr. Maley: Pardon me; it was not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was on the matter of the double income tax that the point was raised. When I insisted upon wiping out the duplication so far as the income tax was concerned, then the hon. member interjecting said that that should apply also the land tax; and we agreed with him. But no matter by whom the point was raised, I wish to draw attention to the hardihood of a leader who wants to take credit for having removed a burden of £25,000 for the placing of which unjustly upon the farmer he and his party were responsible. We understand how desperate the Honorary Minister must have been to make a defence for himself. In conclusion he said, "I hope that next year when the president takes members to task——" He is expecting it next year again. "I hope that when next year the president takes members to task he will not forget to give us credit for the things that we have tried to do." Then, following the leader, we have the Whip, who steps forward with great courage to begin with. The president places his finger on the Whip as being responsible for the complaint made upstairs. The president fixes his eagle eye upon the Whip, and says, "The member who raised the complaint is now present in the hall, and I ask him to say before my face what he said behind my back, chastising me in an undignified way." And so the member for York (Mr. Griffiths) stands up with great courage, but I am informed that in less than five minutes all the courage had oozed out of him. It is said that he wilted very much indeed, and was quite content to take the cane the same as the rest. Then followed Mr. Greig. He was carpeted for dallying in the corridor last session when a Bill affecting the farmers' interests was under consideration. Mr. Greig dutifully gave his explanation; and before they decided whether they should excuse him or not Mr. Moran, who seems to be the tactician of the party, at the conference anyhow, said, "Well, if the matter comes up next session, will you do it again?" "Oh no," said Mr. Greig. "Well," Mr. Moran said, "I do not think there is anything more to be said about it; it is all right. Mr. Greig is brought into line." And so it is. Then we have the Honorary Minister for Agriculture. For about two days the conference must have been like a Donnybrook fair, between the Honorary Minister for Agriculture on the one hand and Mr. Murray on the other. Charges were hurled backwards and forwards at one another even to the extent of charging each other with deliberate untruths; and then,

having slept on the matter during the night, they next morning had a most affecting reconciliation. Mr. Murray awoke to the fact that after all he had nothing against Mr. Baxter, that Mr. Baxter was a decent fellow, and that it was only a horrible misunderstanding. And Mr. Baxter said yes, he had nothing at all against Mr. Murray; and so we had that affecting scene in which they fell upon each other's breasts and wept tears of joy and reconciliation. They had a dramatic handshake to the accompaniment of loud cheers from the gaping farmers looking on. What an affecting scene it must have been. I notice that at the conference it was decided that the finances of the association were in a bad way, that picnics should be organised by the various branches and that members should attend to give instruction and help to build up the finances. If they had had but the foresight to have photographed that dramatic exhibition which took place between Mr. Baxter and Mr. Murray——

Hon. T. Walker: And Mr. Griffiths of the "Daily News."

Hon. P. COLLIER: If only they had had the scene photographed and exhibited around the country at those projected meetings as a picture show——

Mr. Maley: This is the greatest picture show of the lot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member does not like it. He and his colleagues are conscious of the fact that those who took the leading part in the drama made an exhibition of themselves in the public eye, and that they would have done with the whole thing quickly if it were possible. But the humour of the thing is that, next day, Mr. McGibbon asked the august president for an interpretation of the hand-shake. I wonder if Mr. McGibbon and the President are both Scotch. The President is either a real wag or else entirely devoid of humour; because in reply to the request for an interpretation of the hand-shake he solemnly and sincerely proceeded to lay it down, and I believe that interpretation is embodied in the standing orders of the association. If ever, during the course of our debates, we here should fall out and fall in again, weeping on each other's breasts, if the same scene should take place here, and you Sir, are asked next day for an interpretation of it, you will have a precedent to go upon, and we can then amend our Standing Orders accordingly. All this would be very entertaining if it were not so tragic, if it were not fraught with such serious consequence to the State. We have the spectacle of a Minister of the Crown carpeted at that conference because of the manner in which he had administered one of the most important matters that the State is handling at the present time, and carpeted, not by the conference, the political association of which he is a member, but placed upon his trial by a trading concern, by a firm that is a servant of the Government for the time being in regard to the handling of the Wheat Pool in this State. How comes it that a company, a trading concern, has the power or authority to attend such a conference or to place upon trial for his administrative errors one of the Ministers of the Crown? It reveals to us the fact that the sooner the control of the Wheat Pool in this State is taken out

of the hands of a Minister who is subservient to that organisation, and placed in the hands of some Minister independent of them, the better it will be for the welfare of the country. That is what it serves to show us. We had, too, the sorry spectacle—

Mr. Piesse: But he is subservient to that organisation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is he subservient! Why is he there on his trial at the instance of this body if not subservient to them? And not only does the Minister get into this quarrel with the Westralian Farmers, Limited, but he did what I have never known a Minister do before—he even took down to that conference one of the officials of the State in the person of the secretary of the Wheat Pool, had him there alongside of him and dragged him into the miserable controversy with Mr. Murray. When Mr. Baxter denied a statement made by Mr. Murray, Mr. Baxter called upon a Government servant in the person of Mr. Hall to stand up and back him in his statements; and in return Mr. Murray called upon Mr. Stirling Taylor, the manager of the trading concern, to counter with a further denial. The dragging of a public servant into a quarrel of this kind is a degrading spectacle. The Minister should have known better what was due to himself and to an officer of his department than to act in the manner in which he did. In any case the incident reveals to us that an alteration is badly needed. We shall watch with a good deal of interest what the Government may do during the next few weeks in regard to the handling of the coming harvest, because I am convinced that the affecting scene which took place on the morning after the quarrel had something behind it, something which was responsible for it. Something took place that evening, one is justified in assuming, in the shape either of a promise by the Honorary Minister that the Westralian Farmers would have the handling of the coming harvest, or else an intimation that some effective pressure was going to be placed upon him to induce them to back down from the position they had taken up.

Mr. Pickering: The advance did not come from the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Wherever it came from, they had a purpose to serve in their own interest. It did not occur to them in their dreams during that night that it would be a good thing to adopt a different attitude in the morning.

Mr. Pickering: That is mere assumption.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is an assumption which any reasonable man would be justified in adopting. The whole sorry business does not serve to inspire the people of the country with any greater confidence in the Government, particularly when we know that the party concerned control the political life of the Government. It is in their power to turn the Government out at any moment; in their power to dictate the policy of the Government as they have done and are doing. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) took exception to my statement that he had been purchased. In that respect the relationship of those people towards the Government was explained by one of the Ministers whom the hon. member is supporting. Only a little more than 12 months ago the Honorary Minister for

the North-West had occasion to offer some remarks about the Country party and the Liberal party, shortly before he joined the Government. This is what the Honorary Minister said—

In regard to the Country party itself, this party is controlled, not by a conference or congress, but by a little clique of tea and sugar bushrangers, commercial brigands, Alex Monger, Prowse, McGibbon, every one of them a bushranger. They tell the Country party how they shall vote.

Mr. Pickering: Do you believe that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not matter what I believe. This is the opinion of the Honorary Minister, whom the hon. member is supporting. Let the hon. member ask his Minister whether he believes it or not. He said it on the floor of the House.

Mr. Pickering: That was when he was with you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. In any case I do not think the hon. member's opinion has had very much of a reforming effect on the Honorary Minister, who went on to say—

The Liberals sold themselves and their principles holus bolus to the Country party. They have given away all that the Country party asked and they recognise that they must in future continue to give away whatever the Country party demand. The Liberal party have sold themselves to the Country party and the Country party have sold themselves to the Government. I wonder to which party the Minister who made those remarks has sold himself. He is in that camp to-day himself. However, there is the opinion of one of the Honorary Ministers regarding the situation. Commercial brigands are controlling the Government. That was not the only exhibition of the power which these people wield. Only a few weeks earlier the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., had held the annual meeting of their association and we had there another spectacle. They desired to wait upon the Government by way of deputation, to present some requests, and we had the spectacle of a sort of Chinese procession, headed by the Premier, with the Minister for Works coming second, next to him the Minister for Industries, and in the tail Mr. Baxter. The four of them marched down in Chinese procession to this annual meeting to wait upon the deputation, thus entirely reversing the order in these matters of deputations to Ministers.

Mr. Johnston: The office would not hold the deputation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is it necessary to send the whole mob as a deputation? Could not they have appointed a deputation? As a matter of fact at the deputation they had but one spokesman, Mr. Murray. Could not he have gone to the Premier's office? He had it well stage-managed indeed. The whole four of the Ministers sat there. I do not know Mr. Murray, but he must be rather a dramatic gentleman with great histrionic talents. This was a sort of public meeting instead of a deputation. He addressed the Premier and his Ministers about the needs and requirements of his association and he said in the course of his speech,

turning in a dramatic way to his audience of 150 farmers, "Are you satisfied to allow your property to be controlled by a public department?" and the 150 voices replied, "No." Turning again to the deputation Mr. Murray asked, "Will you be content to go back to the merchants to handle your business?" and again the farmers thundered back "No." It was not surprising that after that the Premier should say the matter was of very great importance and he would have to consider the question. What Premier, reinforced as he was by his colleagues, dare stand up and express an opinion which was not suitable to a gathering of that kind?

Hon. T. Walker: Talk about Daniel in the lion's den.

Mr. Maley: You must respect the producers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: After all, this exhibition between these two conferences—

Mr. Troy: One of the planks of the suppliers' platform is that they must be directly responsible to their constituents.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are some Thomas's about. They are remembering the biblical character of Thomas of Didamus, the so-called doubting Thomas's. Only those very sceptical would say anyone was responsible to the electors. I do not know what the electors of Bridgetown and Greenbushes and other parts of the Nelson electorate think of the direct responsibility of their member after reading of the exhibition that took place a week or two ago. Mr. Moran again, as usual, came to the rescue with his fertile suggestions, and he suggested in the end that the whole difficulty perhaps could be got over by the Country party electing another leader. And at once the leader said, "We have already discussed that." He was already prepared for his downfall and that another meeting was going to be held next Wednesday when the matter would be decided, and then the exhibition took place. What I do not understand is how, after Mr. Murray called them out like a master before his class, caning them, and the naughty boys going back rubbing their hands, cautioning them not to do it again, the Treasurer came to be exempt from all this criticism. Mr. Monger wanted to know why the leader of the party was not at the opening of the conference, but no one worried about the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer no longer a member of that body?

Mr. Maley: He is too powerful.

Member: I thought you said too slippery.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not for me to say, but somehow or other the Treasurer seems to be entirely exempt from all that criticism on the part of the president of the association. Having launched the association and set it on its way perhaps the Treasurer has been, like many other great men, content to sit back and see the movement go ahead without his aid or assistance. I am not one of those who object to the farmers having their own organisation. I think they are very wise in doing so; I think the organisation showed an infinite amount of good sense when they refused to allow their members to sink their identity, that is to preserve the identity of their movement. But what I do object to is being hypercritical, that

whilst members are subservient or responsible, I will put it that way, to their organisation, and properly so, at the same time there was a hypercritical pretence at being non-party men and having national sentiment and aspirations. That is the difference between the Country party and the party to which I am associated. The matter of the handling of the coming harvest is of the utmost importance, and I hope members will keep a keen eye on the proceedings of the Commission, as we are all awaiting with great interest the report of the Royal Commission which is now investigating the matter. Therefore it is not wise and perhaps it is no good to go into that matter at length at this stage, but taking it into consideration with other matters connected with the agricultural industry, I want to repeat what I stated previously in this House, that the Government are guilty of what amounts to almost criminal neglect of the best interests of the country when they sit by and allow an Honorary Minister in the person of Mr. Baxter to practically hold the destinies of Western Australia in his hands at the present time. The hon. member is in control of the Agricultural Department, upon which depends practically the future of the State. All our hopes and the future is wrapped up largely in the successful development of the agricultural resources of the country that is being controlled by the Honorary Minister; and in addition he controls what amounts to one of the biggest problems that any Government has had to face, the handling of the harvest, so that the minimum of loss shall be occasioned to the people of the country. In addition to controlling the general activities of the Agricultural Department and the Wheat Pool, he also has control of that other great problem which threatens to wipe out the agricultural industry—I refer to the menace of the rabbits. And now he is responsible and has control of the Wyndham Meat Works and other subsidiary ones which may arise hereafter. If the Honorary Minister were a perfect genius, which he is not, it would be impossible for him to adequately control the multiplicity of departments which involve all the big and intricate problems of the State at the present time. Whilst the Premier, who controls no department at all, does not administer any department of State and is content—the head of the Government is content to allow this state of things to go on with all this responsibility and has not come to his colleagues assistance, during the crisis which occurred a week or two ago, with any defence. Whilst the Government will allow that condition of things to continue we can only hope for chaos and the financial ruin of this State. The Honorary Minister for Agriculture is a blunderer; he is incapable of attending to the important works placed in his charge, utterly incapable of doing it and the situation demands that the Government shall take some steps, and that without a moment's delay, to move the control from one who is perfectly incapable of handling these matters, these big affairs which I have enumerated, and if the Government do not do that the responsibility will be theirs. As long as my

experience of this House goes, no one Minister, even a responsible Minister holding a portfolio, much less a Minister in another place, has been saddled with departments of State such as Mr. Baxter is in this instance. It is only another instance of the utter lack of proportion that exists in the Government of the country at the present time. I am not surprised that the country is faced with a possible big loss in the handling of the wheat harvest. Anyone who has followed the evidence which has been given before the Commission can come to no other conclusion. Unless almost a miracle happens, this country is going to be faced with an enormous loss in regard to the Wheat Pool. There is last season's harvest on our hands, it has not been disposed of and the Government of the country is responsible for the payment of 4s. 4d. a bushel for the harvest. It is committed for the payment of 4s. 4d. a bushel for the ensuing harvest without any idea—it is not their fault at all—of where, when, or how those harvests are to be disposed of. It runs into millions of pounds. Even if there is no loss whatever we know that owing to the neglect of the Government to make proper provision for the last harvest, where the wheat was dumped in many places in swamps and attacked by weevil and mice in all directions, in that connection there is going to be a very great loss indeed. Yet the Government are content after the evidence that was placed before them, even if Ministers did not know it before, at the conference a couple of weeks ago with the utter chaotic state of the scheme. Are the Government going to allow it to drift and to take no action whatever. If they do so this country has to face a situation in which it will be called upon to find a large sum of money to make good the guarantee to the farmers. It is no use for Ministers to stand up and say it is owing to circumstances over which they have no control. It is in that connection, too, that we have to face the situation that the farmers are in danger of being driven off their holdings by the invasion of the rabbits. On this matter the Government stand convicted of culpable negligence.

Mr. Piesse: You share in that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member is the greatest apologist for incapacity I have known in this House. He is so biased and so warped in his mind where Labour is concerned, that he never did see anything good that Labour did, and he never could see anything wrong that was done by the party he supports.

Mr. Piesse: You should be manly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let me deal with the rabbit invasion. Is it not a fact that in November, 1916, the seriousness of the position, so far as the pest was concerned, was brought directly under the notice of the Government by a minute from the Royal Commission?

Mr. Piesse: It was also brought under the notice of your Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: By whom?

Mr. Piesse: By your chief inspector.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The menace at that time was a mere trifle.

Mr. Piesse: That was the time to deal with it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Listen to the apologist again. What has the Government he is supporting done to cope with the pest during the past 12 or 18 months? Absolutely nothing. It is only during last session in this House that the Government were driven into doing something when the adjournment of the House was moved. A storm was created in this Chamber when the Government were awakened to the necessity for doing something to cope with the rabbit pest. The position is this: if action had been taken adequate to the requirements of the situation when the matter was brought under the notice of the Government in November, 1916, we should not be in the position we find ourselves in to-day. I notice in this morning's newspaper, the Honorary Minister—anything of importance on which the life of the State depends is handed over to the incapable Mr. Baxter—in the course of a whole column attempts to defend the attitude of the Government with regard to the position so far as rabbits are concerned. He says that Mr. Giles, who has been trouncing the Government over this matter, is not correct in saying that no action was taken. Mr. Baxter says that the minute was taken into consideration by the Government. Of course it was. Every communication to the Government is taken into consideration, but the trouble is that it never gets further than the consideration stage. That is what is the matter with this country. No matter how big or important a matter may be, after it is brought under notice of Ministers it will never get any further than "It will be brought before Cabinet and taken into consideration." Cabinet is the graveyard of all the hopes and aspirations of the people who are concerned in matters which they bring under the notice of the Government. Mr. Baxter says that the matter was considered, and the fact that the Vermin Bill dealing with the matter was not passed last session was no fault whatever of the Government. In that respect Mr. Baxter cannot even be truthful in his own defence. Whose fault was it that that Bill failed to pass last session? It was brought forward in the dying hours of the session and when it came before this House we had the evidence that one Minister knew nothing whatever about the Bill or even had a coherent idea of the principles of it. On one evening the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill took up one attitude, then the Premier took up another, and the Minister for Industries came along and took up still another. Almost every Minister on the front bench took up a different attitude regarding the clauses of the Bill. Yet Mr. Baxter says that the Government were not responsible for the failure of that Bill to pass. They were responsible for the failure to pass it last session because earlier in the session they introduced two Bills, the Vermin Bill and the Rabbit Bill, both dealing with the same question. Immediately hon. members saw the contents of those Bills it was pointed out that the two dealt with the same matter and that they should



be embodied in the one Bill. As a result a select committee had to be appointed to draft a Bill. The Government had no idea of what was wanted and it devolved upon a select committee of this House to do their work for them. Then the Government did not have sufficient energy or enterprise to put it through Parliament. Mr. Baxter, therefore, is quite wrong when he says that the Government were not responsible. The Government were responsible. They were entirely responsible for the failure to pass the Bill. Even without the Bill the Government have neglected their duty in this matter. I turn to the deputation from the Farmers' and Settlers' Association which waited upon the Premier during conference week. If hon. members have read the report of that deputation it must have been brought home to them the position this country is faced with so far as the rabbit invasion is concerned. Statements were made there by Mr. Moran that matters were fast reaching such a pass in the district of Nungarin that unless immediate steps were taken to enforce poisoning systematically and universally, it was anticipated that not one half of the area put under crop this year would be stripped. Mr. Moran was quoting from a report by Inspector Rowan, and it concluded—

This year I regret to say rabbits are eating the crops in many places as fast as the farmer sows the seed, and settlers report losses of 25 per cent. of areas sown, and this when the rabbit season has not started.

But the most important statement on that matter was contained in the recommendation by the Industries Assistance Advisory Board. In a minute to their Minister they say—

The board desires to impress as strongly as it can the seriousness of the position not only from the point of view of the Agricultural Bank and Industries Assistance Board, but also from a national standpoint. The depredations have assumed alarming proportions, and unless the Government are prepared to take action to combat the pest, the board foresees the time arriving, and that at no distant date, of settlers in the aforesaid districts being forced off their holdings. In this event—and there is no doubt that it will come to pass—the Government must not only be prepared to face serious losses of invested money in connection with abandoned holdings, but later on the same occurrence will take place again through settlers closer in being compelled to relinquish their properties. In concluding the board says it cannot impress the gravity of the situation too strongly.

Hon. members will see what we are faced with. On top of the difficulties confronting us with regard to the disposal of our wheat crop we have this menace of the rabbit invasion. The deputation to which I have referred waited upon the Premier. I do not know why they went to the Premier when the matter is controlled by the Honorary Minister. If my advice to members of the public is worth anything, it is that if they have any matter which concerns any particular Minister, they had better carry their representations to that Minister who is charged with the administration of the department affected.

It is no use going to the head of the Government, who can only in turn pass the matter on to the Minister interested. In this case the deputation went to the Premier and after making very full representations to him to the situation, the Premier replied. That is what he said in opening:—

The speakers had seemed much in earnest in the matter and he concluded by the side of the deputation that its members were in earnest.

The remarkable thing about it is that the Premier seemed to find that they were earnest and he went on to say that the Government realised the seriousness of the matter—the usual reply. Then the Premier asked whether the crops could be saved now. Mr. Moran said that 10 per cent. of them could and the Premier answered that he would undertake to take the matter up on the line suggested by the deputation and see whether anything could be done. I do not think it is unfair when I say that if there is one question that concerns the people of this country upon which the Premier should be in a position to give a reply on the spot, it is the matter that was brought before him on this occasion. It was not something new which was sprung upon him and in regard to which he might have to avail himself of the opportunity to consult his officers. This has been a burning question in the House and the country for the past 18 months and all the definiteness that the deputation could get from the Premier was that the Government would consider it. I know that there are difficulties. We know that wire netting is not procurable at the present time. We know, perhaps, that it is difficult to obtain a sufficient supply of poison. But that did not apply when the matter was urgent 18 months ago.

Mr. Piesse: Or earlier.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member wants to get back to the time when we were in office. Even if it will satisfy him to say that our Government did not do it, does that justify neglect on the part of the present Government? This question has been a burning one during the past 18 months. The Premier himself said at the deputation that one pair of rabbits multiplied to the extent of probably a million in one year. If that is so there must be hundreds of millions more rabbits to-day than there were two years ago. What have the Government done? They have been pushed by this House only a few months ago into constructing poison carts. If the saving of the agricultural areas from the depredations of rabbits depends upon the expenditure of money, then it is infinitely better to spend what money is available for that special purpose, than to spend it in some of the directions in which the Government are at present engaged in spending it. If they can find money to establish industries and to experiment with the making of flower pots and roofing tiles, or grindstones—

The Premier: The Government are not finding money for flower pots.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier is not informed in the matter. Let me tell him what his Government did. They found a sum of, I think, £300 with which to experiment in on

clays to see whether they were suitable for the manufacture of pottery ware. This money was found by the Minister for Industries. It is not a large sum.

The Premier: That will not ruin the country.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Government are so desperately hard up that they have to neglect the rabbit business because of the scarcity of money, I submit that, if this £300 had been spent in the purchase of poison carts the expenditure would have proved of more value to the country than it otherwise would.

Mr. Lambert: You could not get the poison if you had a million carts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That may be so.

Mr. Lambert: The department have no poison and cannot get any.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I accept the Premier's statement that there is a difficulty in obtaining poison. I do not know how far back that difficulty extends, and whether it existed to the same degree twelve months ago as it does now. If the difficulty of the Government in coping with the rabbit pest is owing to a want of poison, wire netting, or other material, over which they have no control, of course they are exempt from condemnation and criticism. If, however, this is due to the fact that they have not sufficient money, that is an entirely different matter. The Premier said in reply to a deputation that it was all a matter of money.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think the explanation is sufficient. If the Government cannot obtain those things I have mentioned, that stands good as the defence, but if the defence is on the score of scarcity of money it does not hold good. No matter how difficult it may be to obtain money, so long as the Government can get it for purposes on which they are expending it to-day in other directions of infinitely smaller importance, a defence on those grounds does not stand good. In any case, notwithstanding the member for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse), it is a matter upon which the Premier might have given a more definite reply to the deputation.

The Premier: They have the reply now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have not seen it.

The Premier: It is in the Press.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then it escaped my notice. I did read somewhere in the Press that in reply to a deputation the Premier stated that the difficulty of the Government was in procuring sufficient poison.

The Premier: That is one difficulty.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That, I suppose, is the whole crux of the position. It is strange indeed that at a time when we are threatened with being overrun with rabbits for the year ended last June this State imported from the Eastern States hares and rabbits to the value of two thousand pounds. Trapping is not allowed here. Whilst the Eastern States are exporting rabbits to the value of hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the Commonwealth Government have made large profits from the sale or export of rabbits, Western Australia, when the rab-

bids are at our back door in millions, and the country is being overrun with them, quite complacently imports rabbits from the Eastern States.

Mr. Lutey: They could use plenty more.

The Attorney General: That is merely a bad habit on the part of Western Australia. This State imports lots of things.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Quite so. If the Minister for Industries succeeds in obviating the necessity for so many imports, he will deserve much commendation from the people of the country. It is not with his approval that all these things are coming into the State, and his energies, so far as the establishment of secondary industries is concerned, are being usefully employed. I wish to assure him that my reference to pottery and other things was not made in any sneering or depreciatory fashion. I recognise, as every hon. member does, the need for establishing industries in this country, and the need for supplying our own requirements instead of continually sending huge sums of money out of the State. It is only a question of what money is available for the purpose of establishing secondary industries, and of the direction in which it could be most usefully employed being outlined. If the Minister can find the money to assist him in the direction in which he is going with respect to the establishment of secondary industries, well and good. I do not think, however, it would be wise to withdraw money from other channels that are perhaps more in need of it in order to establish these industries. If we cannot find the money to cope with such a serious situation as the rabbit invasion, I should say that the establishment of minor industries would have to wait until we reached more prosperous times. That is the position as I view it. With the difficulties in regard to the harvest and other problems that we have to face, if the rabbits get a hold upon this country we are in for a bad time. I am informed that the rabbits are now in the Ranges and spreading over the South-west to some extent. This information does not come from the same source as that which told me that they were coming overland along the trans-Australian railway by millions.

The Premier: We could not find them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Evidently that information was fairly correct, for, unfortunately, they are here in millions, no matter how they got here. If they get into the gullies and valleys of our ranges it will be infinitely more costly and difficult to eradicate them than it would be if they were confined to the open agricultural areas. Of course much will depend upon the individual efforts of the farmers. I do not say for a moment that the responsibility is entirely one for the Government, or that they should do everything. The responsibility rests upon the individual landholder as well as it does upon the Government. Unless every farmer co-operates with the Government in his efforts success will not be obtained. It seems to me it will be useless for the settlers to expend their time,

money, and energy upon the matter if the Government allow the large areas of Crown lands and abandoned holdings to go without proper attention. The next matter to which I would refer is one which has been a great deal talked about, but which so far has not passed the talking stage. I refer to the question of the repatriation of our returned soldiers. First of all let me say, I trust that this question of adequately dealing with the problem of doing justice to our soldiers who are returning to the State will never be brought down to the level of party politics. I hope that one member or one party will not attempt to play off another member or party on a matter of this kind. I hope it stands above any party quarrel. I think I am justified in making this statement because so far, in this House or out of it, I have not on any occasion indulged in any criticisms or made any public utterance with regard to repatriation. I have never used it on the political platform, or in the House.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Perhaps you would not get results unless you did so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope it will be kept out of party politics.

Mr. Teesdale: Are you speaking for yourself only?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am speaking for myself. At the same time it is inevitable that the matter must be a subject for discussion in this House. I hope that whatever views members may give expression to, no matter on which side of the House they sit, they will not be charged with having any ulterior or party motive in view. This State to-day stands out as an evil example of neglect and indifference so far as the permanent settlement on the land of our returned soldiers is concerned. I do not say who is to blame or who is responsible for this. It is true no doubt that private employers, as well as the Government, have done their best to find work for returned soldiers, but that is only tinkering with the question. It is not a solution of the problem of repatriation to push one man out of a job here, or a position there, in order to put in a returned soldier.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is only perpetuating it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not a solution of the difficulty to discharge a married man, upon whose shoulders are the obligations of a family, in order that his position might be filled by a returned soldier. I venture to say that returned soldiers would themselves be the last to expect that sort of thing to be done.

Mr. Teesdale: Has it been done?

Hon. P. COLLIER: All over the place.

Mr. Teesdale: In the case of married men with children?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

Mr. Teesdale: By the Government?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know of a case in which the Federal Government are concerned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before tea I was dealing with the question of the repatriation of

our soldiers, and was endeavouring to point out that the method which is being adopted in some quarters as a solution, or a partial solution, of the problem is to displace married men from holding positions in order to create vacancies for returned men. I have in mind particularly one case in Fremantle where a married man considerably over 50 years of age, with three sons at the war, and himself of course not eligible, a man who had been for many years in the employ of the Federal Government, was dismissed from his position in order to make room for a returned soldier. I do not know whether or not our Government are similarly dismissing—I do not allege that they are. I know of no case where a man has been deliberately dismissed from our State service in order that another man might be employed in his room. But the position to-day is such that if a man should unfortunately become unemployed he has no hope of obtaining employment, even though he is a married man with the responsibilities of a family, while there are any returned soldiers unabsorbed. That is distinctly unfair, because, after all, the citizens who are in our State, and who in the great majority of cases through no fault of their own have not been to the war, must also live and reared their families just the same as anybody else. I wish to warn the authorities or those concerned that it is no solution whatever of the problem of the returned soldier merely to push one man out in order to push another in; no solution whatever. Admittedly, the best solution of the difficulty would be to place as many as possible of our returned soldiers upon the land, or engage them in our primary industries if possible. In this connection I want to say, without hope, being in any way unfair, that the Government have lamentably and miserably failed to rise to the occasion or in fact to do anything at all of any value in the matter of the settlement of our returned soldiers upon the land. One may observe the doings of the Governments of the Eastern States, of none of them, in this connection, and one would be bound to admit that Western Australia has cause to hang her head in shame for her indifference or lack of energy or want of effort in the direction I have indicated. We have had repatriation talk from a hundred platforms. It is the theme of discussion of members of Parliament and prominent citizens and others. Wherever people foregather a lot of pious platitudes are talked about the State's obligations to the returned soldier. While that has been going on for years nothing of a tangible, definite, or practical character has been done. I challenge the Government to give to this House and to the country definite information of anything of any value that has been done in this connection.

Mr. Maley: Give us a constructive idea.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Nonsense! I am administering the affairs of this country. Every time a member attempts to offer a comment or criticism upon the doings of the Government he is met with the same staccato cry of "Give us something constructive." It is not for private members to offer constructive

tive ideas to the Government or to furnish the Government with a policy. The Government assume the responsibility of governing the country, and it is for them to put forward a policy adequate to the situation. Having accepted the responsibilities of office, they cannot shirk those responsibilities by saying, "It is not our fault; no private member told us what to do in the matter."

Hon. J. Mitchell: We pledged ourselves to the Federal Government to do it, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course we did. We pledged our faith and our honour to do it. Let us examine the position. Going back to the Governor's Speech of July last year, I find this paragraph—

(Grave attention is being given to the important question of repatriation, and a detailed statement of the intentions of my advisers in this regard will be made available for your information.

Where is that detailed statement of the intentions of the Government that was promised in July of last year?

Mr. Johnston: It was laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A detailed statement of the Government's intentions?

Mr. Johnston: Yes; and we each had a copy of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A copy of what?

Mr. Johnston: The proposed scheme.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Whose proposed scheme?

Mr. Johnston: The proposed scheme of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell).

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am talking about what appeared in the Governor's Speech of July last year, after the member for Northam had left office. At least the member for Northam has this advantage, that he proposed something in the nature of a definite scheme—whether it was the best possible scheme or not is another question. The paragraph I have quoted said that the present Government would give the details of their scheme to Parliament at an early date. Where are those details? That promise was made 12 months ago. What has happened to the scheme? What has become of the scheme? Only muddle and incompetency. Every time the Government find themselves in a difficulty over this matter they make some flourish in the administration. With a great flourish of trumpets Mr. Camm was appointed to take charge of repatriation, and the public were told through the columns of the Press that now a competent man had been appointed to control repatriation all would be well. I recollect the Honorary Minister for Lands from his place in this House eulogising Mr. Camm and informing members what a capable and energetic man Mr. Camm was, and how he was bound to succeed, and how all grounds for objection or complaint would be removed so soon as Mr. Camm got going. What happened? Things drifted for months, and nothing was done. There was the same bandying about from the Agricultural Department to the Lands Department and from the Industries Assistance Board to the Agricultural Bank—backwards and forwards. When the tide of public opinion threatened to overwhelm the Government, they resorted

to the old stale expedient of, by inference, blaming the officer who was in charge. The fact that Mr. Camm was removed from that position and Mr. McLarty appointed to take charge of it conveys, by inference, nothing but that the failure of the Government to do nothing was due largely to Mr. Camm. No other inference is possible. And so the Government hope to stave off criticism or to satisfy the people for a little while longer by removing Mr. Camm and appointing Mr. McLarty. That has been done. The Premier made a statement that he had a Repatriation Bill drafted, and that it had been drafted for a long time, but that he could not make its contents public because amendment might be desirable right down to the meeting of Parliament. No doubt the Government will seek to shelter themselves from the consequences of their neglect in this matter by saying that they have not the necessary statutory authority and have not a Repatriation Act passed. I say that any such explanation, if attempted, will not hold water for a moment; because no legislation is required. The Government have under existing Acts of Parliament all the powers and authority necessary to do what is needed for the settlement of returned soldiers on the land. No explanation of that kind will do. A little while ago the Premier told the country that the Government had 158 farms available for returned soldiers. Apparently that was considered to be something equal to the situation—158 farms—something adequate to meet the undertaking given by our State Government to the Commonwealth Government to settle about 4,000 or 5,000 returned soldiers on our lands. That is the undertaking and the obligation of our Government. Outside the few soldiers settled sparsely here and there in our agricultural areas either on new farms or on abandoned farms, and outside six poultry farmers established at Osborne Park, what has been done? Even as regards that small matter of establishing six poultry farmers at Osborne Park, we have had evidence in the newspapers only a week or two ago of bungling and mismanagement. These six returned soldiers were handled by a board of experts, and had to spend a good deal of their time in graduating at the Subiaco poultry university; but even with such assistance the Government could not handle that small matter without bungling in the details. At any rate, the Government have not denied that bungling has occurred. In his policy speech of September last year the Premier made a statement which I shall quote, a statement which is typical of the utterances delivered from time to time until I venture to say the public of this country, the man in the street, must be absolutely disgusted with hearing speeches on what the Government intend to do and are going to do in the happy future depicted for all men who have gone to fight for this country, whilst at the same time an utter want of energy, of initiative, and of capacity is evidenced by the Government on all hands. It is not too much to make that statement. In his policy speech of September last the Premier, who was just going before the electors and was appealing for support, said—

I know of no place in the world with better prospects for mixed farming. The market is at our doors, and we sent out of Western Australia last year over a million sovereigns for the purchase of essential food supplies, all of which can be and should be produced here if there were only the people to do it. We now feel that the time has arrived when our attention should be very closely directed to and centred upon the development of the South-West—

The member for Bunbury (Mr. Money) will know that that phrase about the development of our great South-West is not an original conception. That theme has been harped upon for many many years. The Premier's speech of September last year proceeds—

—the development of the South-West, that fair province in which we have an assured rainfall, an area larger than the whole of Victoria, a soil rich and productive, and a climate second to none in Australia. While the appearance of past neglect may be a matter for some regret, it is the intention of my Government to devote its energies in the direction of bringing about closer settlement and intense culture. Assistance will be given to returned soldiers to settle in this locality. Under the ready made farm system blocks of from 30 acres to 160 acres according to existing railways will be made available. The holdings will be fenced, from 10 to 20 acres cleared, a home built upon it, and a water supply provided. . . . Every inducement will be given to the returned soldier to go in for mixed farming, pig and poultry raising, fruit and potato growing, etc., etc.

That was the policy of the Government in respect to the settlement of soldiers in the South-West, prior to the elections.

Mr. Pickering: And a very good policy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: An excellent policy, but I want the Premier to tell the House to what extent effect has been given to that policy. How many of those small holdings of from 30 acres to 160 acres in the South-West have been made available, how many have been cleared, how many homes have been erected in the South-West in pursuance of this policy? It cannot be said that the Government have not had time. Some 12 months have elapsed and it cannot be said we are hustling the Government when we want to know at this stage what has been done. I say that nothing whatever has been done, so far at least as the country knows, unless indeed the modesty of Ministers prevents them giving the information to the public. Not one returned soldier, I believe, has been settled in the South-West, certainly no definite policy of preparing these small areas has been undertaken. I know that the Government have been busy, they have had their time occupied by many things; but if there is anything which the Government were in honour bound not to set aside for other things it was this matter of providing opportunities for returned men to settle on the agricultural areas, particularly in the South-West. What is the position at the present time? Returned soldiers are becoming disheartened and disgusted with tramping about from office to office, from official to official and from

Minister to Minister in an endeavour to get some definite results and finality to their requests to have farms made available to them. The consequence is that to-day Western Australian returned soldiers are leaving this State for the Eastern States because they are convinced they will there get better opportunities than are afforded to them here.

The Premier: Not because they cannot get land here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because they cannot get suitable land here.

The Premier: No, because they think they will be better off there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will the Premier say that every returned soldier who has been deavoured to get land in this State has been met by the Government here?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, certainly not. There might have been offered abandoned holdings in the agricultural areas.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How many men have been offered the kind of settlement that the Premier outlined in his policy speech?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): How many have applied?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the Honorary Minister's idea of his obligations to the soldiers, namely to sit down and ask how many have applied. It is the duty of the Government to hold out inducements to the soldier and not to wait until they come along. If the Government expect to settle retired soldiers by sitting down and waiting until those returned soldiers come around knocking them off of their dug-outs? It is their duty to make known to the returned soldiers what facilities are afforded. Let Ministers give the House the information as to what the Government have done to settle men in the South-West in accordance with the policy outlined by the Premier.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Some of the soldiers have applied for the Harvey blocks and found the conditions impossible.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a sufficient number of men already on the land who have had a hard struggle to make a do of it. It has been harped upon in season and out of season that if there is one aspect of agriculture which ought to be developed it is that of dairy produce. I believe that the policy outlined by the Premier is a good one, that it is the only way in which to settle the South-West. To ask the individual settler, the returned soldier or civilian, to go there and face the heavily timbered country by himself is to ask an impossibility. The South-West can only be settled by the Government taking up the matter and encouraging the necessary expenditure by clearing areas and erecting homes so that the settlers may have a proper start. So far as I can see, nothing whatever has been done in regard to developing the policy outlined by the Premier. It is not a matter of assertion, it is common talk in the streets, on the trams and on the trains, everywhere we meet returned soldiers we hear the same complaint. If the Government have done something in the direction in which I say they

have done nothing, then they are to blame for any criticism, in that they have not make known to the public what they have done and what they propose to do. The fact is the Government have lamentably and miserably failed to rise to the occasion in regard to the settlement of our returned soldiers on the land. It is of no use dilly-dallying with the matter. If we had not the land, if we cannot find suitable areas good enough for these men, let us be frank and say so and not be giving out to the public day by day the inference that there are unlimited areas of land available for the purpose. I say the Government have not attempted seriously to carry out their policy, although with a flourish of trumpets the Honorary Minister was set aside in the matter and the public was told that the Premier had taken this question of repatriation entirely on himself and that things would be different. Has there been any difference, has any improvement been made, is there any more satisfaction abroad to-day than there was when the Honorary Minister was controlling the matter? I venture to say there is not. Again, if we cannot settle men on the land under this Commonwealth scheme of repatriation whereby we get assistance from the Federal Government, now are we going to settle out of our own resources the ordinary citizens who want to go on the land? The Federal scheme affords a splendid opportunity for the State to get its land settled. With the assistance made available by the Commonwealth Government we have an opportunity which has never been presented in the past and which, I do not suppose, will be presented again in the future. If under these circumstances we cannot do something effective, the outlook is hopeless indeed for and settlement, particularly in the South-West. No number of platitudes will suit the situation. On the question of immigration we have the Agent General making a trip to France, interviewing the soldiers and pointing out the opportunities in Western Australia for and settlement. We cannot cope with the few score of men we have in the State, cannot place them, yet at the same time our Agent General is talking in France and London about our being able to absorb 25,000 men a year. If there is one thing more reprehensible than another is that the Government's representative in England should in any way endeavour to mislead the people of Great Britain, who do not know the circumstances. It is a cruel, callous thing to bring men out here under misrepresentation.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The Agent General was only quoting what the Government here had determined upon.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that. I know that the Agent General is not talking on his own responsibility. We have in the past met immigrants from the Old Country lured to Western Australia under false pretences. It arouses the utmost sympathy to find men and women stranded in a new country under conditions which they have not been led to expect.

Mr. Teesdale: The officials lied to them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It ought not to be done; the Government ought to see that it is

not continued. This is what Mr. Connolly said, dealing with the question of the increase in freights—

The Agent General of Western Australia, whose Government have been making extensive preparations for the settlement of ex-service men after the war, stated that it would not be going too far to say that the suggested increase in the immigration rates from £14 and £16 to £38 was a proposition for restricting emigration to the dominions rather than encouraging it. It is an utterly impossible proposition, he added, to ask a young State like Western Australia, with a population less than 350,000, which requires and is prepared to take at least 25,000 ex-soldiers a year, to pay a rate of anything approximating £38.

Will the Government inform the people of this country what part of the State wherein or how they have been making these extensive preparations to settle large numbers of ex-service men?

Mr. Teesdale: We do not want 25,000 this year, at all events.

Mr. Pickering: The sooner they come the better.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it the Agent General made this statement on the authority of his Government. I cannot believe that the Agent General would make a statement of that kind without such authority. If he has done so he ought to be brought to book.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The same advice was sent to the British people by the Government here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Where are the Government making extensive preparations to absorb large numbers of ex-service men?

Mr. Teesdale: I do not think the Government ever said it, irrespective of Mr. Connolly.

The Premier: It was said years ago, in your time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Agent General is disseminating information or making statements of that kind upon a policy which existed years ago he ought to be checked at the earliest possible moment; he says, "My Government," meaning the present Government, now, "are making extensive preparations for the settlement of ex-soldiers."

Hon. J. Mitchell: In November, 1916, that advice went Home.

Mr. Pickering: It is time it was cancelled.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He speaks of 25,000 men a year. It is an appalling, inaccurate statement. Do we not know that the Government cannot properly deal with the number of men in our own State? Where are the Government going to settle 25,000 men a year on the land? It is an utterly false statement to make and ought to be withdrawn, refuted, or contradicted at the earliest possible moment. In our best days, when we had great empty areas in hundreds of thousands of acres in this country, and everybody was looking for land, we were not able to absorb 25,000 settlers a year, and keen and anxious as I am to increase the population of the country—I have said it be-

fore and say it again—if we are going to hold Australia for the white race we have to fill its empty spaces—at the same time it is no use making absurd and misleading statements. What would happen in the State to-morrow if 1,000 ex-service men wished to go on the land, to say nothing of 25,000? It would mean utter chaos.

Hon. J. Mitchell: We did place 15,000 one year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was in the days which I was speaking about, when everybody was going on the land. It is quite clear that land once settled is not available. The statements such as I have mentioned ought to be attended to. The Agent General is a responsible officer and the Government are responsible for all the statements made on their behalf. It is not right to have our Agent General talking to the people of the Old Country in that way. We can understand that there will be a much more ready response in the Old Country to an appeal for immigrants in the future than in the past, because Australia to-day is known in a different manner throughout every hole and corner of the Old Country than it was prior to the war. Our soldiers have made Australia known to the people of the Old Country, and when representatives of the Government say to them, "We want 25,000 of your ex-servicemen a year; we have made extensive preparations to receive them," we can understand the response will be spontaneous. What is going to happen then? There is in the "British Australasian" a Western Australian advertisement; it is dated 16th May of the present year, and it says—

Western Australia, the largest State in the Commonwealth, has made remarkable progress in agricultural and industrial development. It has most liberal land laws, providing for assistance to new settlers. Free homestead farms of 160 acres are open for selection in the most fertile districts, and special financial aid granted to ex-service men.

Mr. Pickering: What does it mean by homestead farms?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It goes on to say—

Millions of acres available for settlement, suitable for wheat and fruit growing and mixed dairy farming. Delightful climate and an assured rainfall. Western Australia produces 55 per cent. of the total gold yield of Australia, and the yield to date exceeds £137,000,000. The forests of Western Australia are famous for jarrah and karri hardwoods, suitable for sleepers, paving timbers, bridge beams, piles, etc., etc. Finest fruit grown in the world, record prices for apples and grapes being obtained at the London markets each season.

"Millions of acres available for settlement suitable for wheat and fruit growing and mixed farming!" That is what the Agent General says.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It is quite true; the land may not be surveyed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is a Western Australian advertisement authorised by the Government, and the inference is that the acres are there waiting for people to settle on them.

Anyone who reads that advertisement infer that the millions of acres are there awaiting settlement now, not in the future, not year hence. In the desire to settle our lands and to encourage immigration, it is essential that care should be taken not to make misleading or improper statements, because the truth will quickly get back to the Old Country and wind round on the State and other parts of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Pickering: It has gone back before to-day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has. We have had experience of it. But we have got through that and we do not want to start in the same way again. At the present time, when it is a undoubted fact that the Government have not been able to find suitable land for all our own soldiers returning, only about six or seven per cent. of them, or a small number, when we are not able to find land for men at the present time, what are we going to do when all the soldiers return, not so say anything about the ex-service men.

Mr. Pickering: Give them free meal tickets.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister will have to open another dépôt. The position is a serious one, there is no doubt, and it requires the prompt and earnest attention of the Government. It is no use saying it will receive grave consideration. We shall have, I suppose, an opportunity of further considering the Government's policy, or want of policy, or efforts, or lack of efforts, in regard to the settlement of soldiers when the Repatriation Bill is introduced in the House, which we are promised at an early date. As I have already stated, it is not sufficient for the Government to merely deal with these returned men. If the Government have the land awaiting settlement, it is the duty of the Government to placard the fact to the world, and it is only right to Western Australia. If we have millions of acres why not have a standing advertisement in the "West Australian" every day inviting soldiers to take it up and telling them where it is? While we are advertising in the Old Country we are not doing anything in the State. I submit emphatically, without a trace of party feeling, or desire to be unfair, that it is my firm conviction that the Government have failed in the matter of meeting their obligations on this question of repatriation to a greater extent than they have failed on the other big questions they have handled and that is saying a great deal indeed. The next question that I wish to touch on is the all absorbing one of finance and I did intend dealing with the matter at some length, but I do not know that any good will be accomplished by my doing so now. The position of the State financially needs no reiteration at my hands. It is known now to everybody. It is deplorable in the extreme and when I say that the Government are responsible, I am going no further and saying no more than was said of the Government of which I was a member. Excuses are being found for the financial drift on all hands. The Treasurer instances unforeseen expenditure—just as there was not unforeseen expenditure in every year. This excuse and that excuse is being

advanced but no excuse whatever can relieve the Government of their responsibility for the position. The Government, with all the influence behind them, told the people of the country prior to the Labour Government leaving office that the financial condition of the State was due entirely to our want of administrative ability, and that one statement was so consistently and persistently made, that the Government almost created a state of panic. They had convinced a large section of the electors of the State that the solvency of Western Australia depended on the Liberal Government going into office. I could quote for hours speeches made by the present Ministers and their supporters on that aspect of the question. They are familiar to members of the public and I am not going to weary members with them, but just a few brief references or extracts from these speeches would not be uninteresting at the present juncture. A fortnight after the Minister for Industries took office in the Liberal Government this is what he had to say—

The effect of the advent of the Liberal Government would be, as it had been already, to inspire confidence, and if the Liberal Government was continued it would protect the men and the money of Western Australia, place the affairs of the country on a sound footing, and ensure success and prosperity for the country consequently bringing more work, more money for everyone.

That was a fortnight after his taking office. If a fortnight's administration, on the part of this business man was going to have such a wonderful effect, what degree of prosperity might we not expect after two years of such administration? At the end of two years we ought to be flowing with prosperity. I am only quoting the Attorney General at that time. No one has been more full of protestations as to the need for economy, reorganisation and reform than the present Treasurer, and during one of his outbursts of enthusiasm, in which he declared what would be done if he was in charge, this is what he said—

We have duplications of departments right throughout the service. Hon. members know that we will have to put the knife into the bone in administrative and other expenditure, with a callous indifference to sentiment and without fear, favour, or exception.

We had duplications right throughout the service! How many of the duplications have been abolished? It was the old cry that they were going to restore confidence, not by retrenchment, not by taxation, but by amalgamation of departments. They fooled the public into the belief that the departments as they existed were the result of the incompetent blundering of the administration of the Labour Government, and it only required the amalgamation then suggested to restore the equilibrium of the finances. Then, with regard to the extravagant expenditure of the previous year, he said—

If I do not carry out as far as possible what I have promised I will not respect myself, and if hon. members do not make me carry it out I will not respect them either.

I am endeavouring to make him carry out his promise in order that I may retain his respect. Then he went on—

We as a Government have to do what we say we shall do or get out and let someone else do it. So far as reform is concerned, the time for promising is past. If I do not do it I do not wish to stop here.

What has the hon. gentleman to say about it now? The time for promising, he says, is past. Has he done it? Have the Government done it? Have they made any kind of serious attempt to do it? If they have, what results have they achieved?

Mr. Munsie: They have a bigger deficit than that of their predecessors.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Treasurer said further—

Then we come to the solid fact that in the midst of all these difficulties there has been no reduction in administration; indeed there has been a pretty substantial increase. I am voicing an outside opinion in this. If the House can show to the country that it is cutting the administration down to the bone somewhere near the same reduction as a private business enterprise might do, then the people will not cavil at legitimate taxation.

Cutting down expenditure to the bone! Has he done it? Why, every day the newspapers contain the information that new appointments are being made and increased emoluments are being granted here, there, and everywhere. This cry about the cutting to the bone, about economy, is mere platitudinous piffle, and the Government have failed miserably to live up to their professions.

Mr. Davies: And we have not seen the worst yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have not. Then the Premier had something to say about the finances in his policy speech before the last election. This is the peroration—

For the benefit of the State the National Government has to clear up the finances, and it will endeavour to do this with the assistance of Parliament and the people. There is no fear for the future. The National Government have the means to properly develop the State, and of lifting it out of its present position, and the Government have the interests of the State at heart. (Cheers.)

That was at Moora. How far has the Premier achieved his promise? We have the plain hard fact standing out in monumental proportions that the Government, for the financial year just closed, have done worse in handling the finances than any Government the State has ever had. Whilst the Liberal Government managed to get through with a deficit of £700,000 for the year, our friends, the reforming Government, the cut-to-the-bone Government, the economy Government, the amalgamation and reorganisation Government, wound up the year with a deficit of £705,000, or £5,000 more than their predecessors. And that does not include £25,000 which they received from the double land tax which they ought not to have had credited last year, but which will have to be deducted this year. That £25,000 or thereabouts was collected for the six months and



included in last year's revenue. The Government collected £60,000 in land tax last year. That was because of the extra six months. They will only collect £20,000 this year, so that the actual deficit last year should have been £730,000 instead of £705,000. And that is the record of a Government which came into office to restore the finances which was the pledge given to the electors of this country. The Treasurer to-day has the hardihood to attempt to shift the responsibility for the incapacity of the Government on to the general public of the country. He says—

I have been endeavouring to hammer home to the electors for some time the need for economy, but apparently without avail.

The Treasurer seeks to shift the responsibility for the fact that they have not economised on to the electors. He cannot get rid of his responsibility in that way. The electors of the country did realise the need for economy in that they returned this Government to power by an overwhelming majority, pledged to a policy of economy. What more could the electors do? When the Government went to the country last September on a policy of economy and reform, they got the majority they asked for. Did not the electors do their share of the business by returning them? How can the Treasurer twist the position round and say that the electors are to blame? It is the Government who are responsible. They have had instructions from the electors to economise and they have failed miserably to do so. To-day they say they are hard put to it to keep expenditure down to the level of last year. The Government pledged themselves not only to keep the expenditure to the level of that of their predecessors, but to reduce it below that. They are on the benches opposite at the present time under false pretences. They said they could do these things, and they have failed, and as the Treasurer has stated, if he failed, then he ought to be put out. I repeat, the Government are retaining their position to-day under false pretences, because they have failed to realise their obligations to the electors. No excuse was permitted for the Labour Government. In the last year of our administration we managed to get through with a deficit of £350,000. In the first year after we went out of office it doubled, and last year it was even bigger. Now the electors, who believed the professions of the Government, have an opportunity of judging the value and the sincerity of the declarations and the statements made regarding the work of the Labour Government. In our worst days we never reached the state of the financial incapacity that has been evidenced by the present Government, and I say that, allowing for increased expenditure over which the Government have no control. I allow their increase last year of £211,000 by way of added interest and sinking fund charges, and I allow for a reduction of the revenue from the Commonwealth to the extent of £16,000. That makes in round figures about £230,000 that the Government had to find which the Labour Government were not called upon to find in our last year of administration, and over which the present Government have had no control. Even allowing this £230,000 they are still

£150,000 to the bad on the year's operations in comparison with the last year of the Labour Government.

Mr. Munzie: And they have curtailed the services to the public also.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What are the Government going to do about it?

Hon. T. Walker: Stop where they are of course.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is there anything in the Governor's Speech to give hope that the position will be any better in the future? As I have already said, they do not even mention in the Governor's Speech this year as they did last year "that the financial position is causing my financial advisers grave anxiety." They have got past that stage. They have got to the position of sublime fatalism which offers no hope to the future of this country. They have not a shred or a vestige of policy to meet the situation. How could they have? They are made up of opposition and inconsistencies. They have in their ranks men who have nothing in common. I can tell the Government why I think they have failed to do what they said they would do. With a coalition composed of three parties what happens? Immediately the Government proposed to follow on a particular course which might mean reducing expenditure or increasing taxation, if they begin to take a certain road they hit up against one or other of the three composing parties, and immediately that party says, "Oh no, you must not restore the finances in that way; that will not suit us." Then the Government will endeavour to strike out in another direction, and they are immediately up against the interests of the second party which makes up the coalition. That party will say "That will not do us." They then turn in a still further direction and they are up against a third party. The result is that, having tried to get out along three roads they have not got on the right track, and the result is that they have to go back to the starting point and stand and potter about and do nothing. That is why the Government were bound to fail, namely, because of the manner in which it was composed. It is no use saying, "you will drop your party politics." That is all very well if they can do it. The Government cannot stand still. They must do something, or endeavour to do so. If they endeavour to do something they strike up against the obstacles I have just indicated.

Hon. T. Walker: Even the two Treasurers contradicted each other.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government entirely lack cohesion and co-operation. Every day we read of a statement being made by one Minister which is contradicted by another.

Mr. Pickering: That is an exaggeration.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a good illustration. It shows that each Minister is acting off his own bat, without regard to how it is going to affect someone else. Is it any wonder they have a deficit? There is the Colonial Secretary, who when he was leading the Opposition to the Labour Government in another place said, "I will not vote for increased taxation, or to give one penny to

this incompetent Government to squander." It is not my duty or responsibility to particularise individuals, or to make comparisons between the relative capacities of the different Ministers in the present Government, but if I attempted to do so I should say that the most incompetent administrator of the whole team was the Colonial Secretary.

Hon. T. Walker: The most reckless.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has a fluent and eloquent tongue, but as an administrator he is merely a rubber stamp and an echo of his departmental officers.

Mr. Pickering: He is to be the new Premier.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The expenditure of his departments is something like £500,000. We find an increased expenditure right along the line and everywhere we look.

Mr. Johnston: The "West Australian" wants to send him down here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Are we getting any return for that increase of £10,000 on the police estimates of last year? Are we to go on having such exhibitions of incapacity as have been revealed to us during the last few days. What are we to get in return for that increased expenditure?

Mr. Teesdale: Was it not spent in deferred pay?

Hon. P. COLLIER: In some respects it was, but it was also to help to keep officers in their positions in which there was no work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are too many officers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is wanted is something in the nature of a searching commission into that and other departments. Without threatening the Government, I want to say that when we come to discuss the Police Estimates this year I will have something to talk about. We do not want, as we see to-day, highly placed officials of the Police Department, who formerly could ride on the tram or the train or a bicycle, going to their luncheon and here, there, and everywhere in motor cars. It is beneath their dignity now to ride a bicycle. I could go on detailing for hours instances of extravagant and unjustifiable expenditure in this and other departments. I will just illustrate one point in this respect. We have to-day, in our detective branch, two inspectors in charge of the detectives. We have only a handful of detectives altogether. In Adelaide and in Brisbane, and even Melbourne, there is only one head of the detective branch. In Western Australia we have two heads, and in order to find work for one we have this position: If we take up our newspaper we find that at the police courts at Fremantle, Northam, or Kalgoorlie, a detective inspector is conducting the prosecution. Any trivial cases are conducted by a detective inspector at Fremantle, who has to go from Perth, although there is already a uniformed inspector and a sergeant stationed there. A detective inspector is sent from Perth to conduct a prosecution at Kalgoorlie, although there is also an inspector and a sergeant here; and there is a sergeant at Northam to conduct cases in that centre.

Mr. Green: There are no criminals at Kalgoorlie at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For what are they required? Is the inspector who is already there unfit, or is the sergeant unfit to conduct these cases? If they are unfit they should be removed and others put in their place. In the courts in Perth a sergeant conducts a prosecution in all cases, yet in Fremantle, Northam, and Kalgoorlie we have a detective inspector journeying around the country at big travelling allowances every day that he is away. This illustrates the way in which criminal extravagances and expenditure are going on, although the State is in the position it is now in. This ought to be stopped.

Mr. Teesdale: Then you advocate retrenchment in the civil service?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not advocate retrenchment. This dual position was created or advocated by this Government.

Mr. Teesdale: A new position?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

Hon. T. Walker: An innovation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We had one detective inspector, but the Government in pursuance of their policy of economy, created another. This is something which Adelaide and Brisbane have not got. Right along the line we have the same thing. Where one Minister effects an economy another Minister will give away four or five times the amount that has been saved. The Speech tells us about the Harvey dispute having been settled between the department and the settlers. Do members know that the dispute involves the Treasury in a loss of something like £4,000 or £5,000 a year? The Harvey people asked for an irrigation scheme. They undertook to pay an annual rate which would provide interest and administrative cost on the capital expenditure, that even after something like £9,000 was nationalised, as it were, and written off. The rate to cover that expenditure was struck at 17s. 6d. per acre. Of course, they no sooner had the scheme installed when they quite naturally objected to the rate and endeavoured to have it cut down. The dispute has been owing to the fact that some of the people have refused to pay. They considered that the rate of 17s. 6d. was altogether too high, although it only covered what they promised it would cover, namely the cost. Some of them adopted an attitude of passive resistance, and lately the Minister for Water Supply took the matter into his own hands and went down to the district.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Does he not represent that district?

Hon. P. COLLIER: He went down there and attended a public meeting, and discussed the matter with the settlers. He returned to Perth and made representations to his colleagues. I believe he said, "My colleagues agreed with me," and he added that an adjustment had been made satisfactory alike to the Government and the settlers.

Hon. T. Walker: To all parties concerned.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The adjustment consisted of reducing the rate from 17s. 6d. an acre to 14s. an acre. That is no doubt satis-

factory from the point of view of the settlers. The Minister says it has been satisfactory alike to the Government and the settlers. It is only a coincidence, I suppose, that these same settlers, who have succeeded in bluffing the Minister into reducing the rate in this way, live in an important centre of the electorate of the Minister for Water Supply. If the Government are to be generous to the settlers at Harvey in reducing the rates, there are many places on the goldfields where they have opportunities of also reducing the rates and showing their gratitude there as well. That is why the Government have failed. They make a paltry economy here or there, and ask the office boy and everyone else to make suggestions for further economies. They stop the supply of pencils and cut down the supply of writing paper, and they restrict the quantity of pens that may be used.

Mr. Teesdale: You do not oppose that, I suppose?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but it is only typical of the finicky, pettifogging attitude of that they are not entitled to relief or consideration because of the fact that the Minister represents them.

Mr. Thomson: I have not been able to get any of it.

Mr. Johnston: The hon. member would not refuse to relieve the Harvey settlers because the Minister for Works represented that portion of the State?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but let me say that they are not entitled to relief or consideration because of the fact that the Minister represents them.

Mr. Thomson: They are entitled to justice.

Hon. T. Walker: What is done at Harvey should be done in all other centres in the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are told in the Speech, with regard to the gold-mining industry, that in the circumstances the present output of gold must be regarded as satisfactory. That is only a platitude. It is a prevarication. The position of the gold-mining industry, and the outlook, were never so black as they are at present. In the past two years the value of the gold yield has fallen to the extent of £1,500,000. That is given out as being satisfactory. I have only this to say before sitting down, that I think I have shown right along the line on every big question of importance that calls for stern and strong handling, that the Government have failed. They have failed in the handling of the Agricultural Department in that it is still controlled by the Honorary Minister. They have failed to meet the situation so far as the rabbit plague is concerned. They have failed so far as the financial position of the State is concerned. They have failed from one end of their administration to the other during the past 12 months. I think, and believe, that the best interests of this country will be served by showing the Government the steps of the Treasury Department. If a party with these 34 members cannot produce a Government that can give a better record and better results than this Government have given during the past 12 months, there is nothing but ruin and bankruptcy staring this country in the face.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore)

·45] The member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier)

cannot, at any rate, say that I have not listened to him with close attention. It is always a pleasure to me to listen to him. It was the case when sat on the other side of the House. No doubt, he is a pastmaster in the art of criticism. The matters that he has brought before the House to-day are matters of small moment, very small moment indeed, in accounting for the expenditure or the revenue of the country. He has told us that the Governor's Speech had length but without breadth. I have heard that before. Hon. members sitting in opposition generally make some complimentary remark such as that with regard to the Governor's Speech. The Speech, I think, a general review of the position of Western Australia. In my opinion it is not the duty of the Government to place before this country and the world such a position as might reflect injuriously upon Western Australia, and at the same time point to the fact that it is not a suitable country for people to reside in. I think, in spite of the fact, that the Governor's Speech is said to contain very little, it does contain some ray of hope in regard to Western Australia. So far as the hon. member is concerned, there seems to be no hope. I think the Speech expresses some amount of faith in the future of Western Australia. I am not one of those who, because we have cloud of war over us and because owing to the cloud of war we have got into a difficult financial position, thinks that we should close up our shutters. This will appeal to hon. members on the cross benches on this side of the House. I say that if a man who has a large agricultural and pastoral estate finds that through adverse circumstances and lower prices he has begun to get behind in his finances, that man should not at once throw up the sponge, and say "I will do nothing with my property," that man has to look after his fences and his stock and see that his stock does not deteriorate and to see that his fences are kept properly in repair, and that everything that tends to the work of obtaining revenue for his property should be kept in good working condition. In order to do that he is put to considerable expense. Unfortunately, at the present time the Western Australian Government has to spend money in various directions keeping its house in order so as to be ready to meet those good times when they come to us later on. That accounts to a large extent for the need of spending money in Western Australia at the present time. Some members think it is not necessary to expend that money. I know there may be some who think we are spending too much on education. Our educational system is one that has grown up with the country. It is not a system which belongs to any one Government, but is a system that has grown up by the wisdom of various Governments. We have either to break down that system altogether or continue the system at the present time. It has been stated that our educational expenditure is not required to increase. We are told in some quarters that we have our manhood at the front, and that our cost for education is increasing. Our children are not at the front, and the men who remain behind are the married men and the children are increasing in Western Australia to such an extent that we had 2,000 more children in our schools last year than we had in the previous year. That means that we must have some increased expenditure in order to provide for this. That is one of the sources by which our expenditure increases. The hon. member in the course of his speech informed us that the

country was in a state of chaos. We have always heard that from the Opposition benches. At the same time the hon. member will admit that I, at any rate, have not been in the habit of charging any Government with placing the country in a state of chaos. It is a known fact, it is a truism, that every Government that comes into power endeavours to do their best in the interests of Western Australia, and I do know Ministers no matter what Government they belong to, work exceedingly hard. The hours of Ministers are longer than the hours of ordinary business men, and moreover a Minister's work has to be carried very often into the small hours of the night. The hon. member entered a very strong protest against the proposal to introduce the Estimates in the middle of September. He protested against Parliament meeting six weeks after the close of the financial year. There is nothing unusual in this. I have always heard that same criticism, and moreover the present Government are in a different position with regard to the present session than any previous Government in Western Australia. We only closed Parliament at the end of May this year, almost at the end of the financial year, and within a very short time we asked Parliament to meet again. To satisfy the House that there has been nothing unusual in what has happened in this I would like to inform members that the Estimates were laid before the House in 1912-13 on the 17th October. In the year 1913-14 the Estimates were laid before Parliament on the 16th October; in the year 1914-15, following a general election I admit, the Estimates were submitted on the 22nd December. In 1915-16 the Estimates were submitted to the House on the 14th September, and in 1916-17, after a change of Government, the Estimates were submitted to the House on the 21st November; and, as hon. members know, last year the Estimates were not submitted until the 7th February, after a general election. So that, when the Treasurer informs us that he expects to be able to place his Estimates before members in the middle of September, I think members must admit that, if they desire to have any consideration for the Government and the Treasurer, more especially owing to the fact that he was out of Western Australia for some time, the Treasurer will do very well if he is able to get the Estimates before the House in the middle of September. If he does do so it seems to emphasise the fact that he will have followed a course that has not been unusual in Western Australia. There are many questions that the member for Boulder has brought before the House which will be dealt with by the Ministers concerned during the course of the debate, but I desire to deal generally with the matters that have been placed before us by hon. members. I would like to allude to one matter at this moment—with regard to the hon. member's criticism of the Minister in charge of the Agricultural Department going to the conference of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. I do not think it a wrong thing to do. The hon. gentleman did not appear there by command in any way. He desired, as there had been considerable criticism with regard to the handling of the wheat, that he should be able to place before those interested the whole question of the handling of the wheat. That was his sole desire, to go amongst those people who are mostly interested, and he informed them directly what was the position with regard to the handling of the harvest. For that reason only did he go there, and I think I am perfectly safe in saying

he did not do so in any way by command. Did the hon. member wish to infer that the Honorary Minister had been ordered to do so by the czar of the Farmers and Settlers Association—to appear at the bar and answer to the association for all his deeds, whether good or bad?

Mr. Munsie: You admit there is a czar then.

The PREMIER: I am not saying that for a moment. It would be better if I were to say the king of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. Members will quite understand the spirit in which I make these remarks. The hon. gentleman was not in any way commanded to go there. He simply went to the meeting of the association to give them the information which they desired. The hon. member makes a great deal of the fact that he and some other gentleman shook hands. The hon. member informed the House that they fell on one another's breasts and wept tears of joy. The hon. member always is at his best when dramatic. The House, I am sure, listened not only with pleasure but with great interest to the hon. member on that point.

Mr. Munsie: There was a great deal of it true.

The PREMIER: The Honorary Minister explained the position with regard to the handling of the wheat, and it was on that occasion that this dramatic scene that the hon. member referred to took place. Mr. Baxter was asked afterwards to go down and meet the association. He went down and I believe he happened to meet this gentleman, who said, "Well, you and I have had a good many differences in the past, but I desire after your explanation that any feud there might have been between us, and any differences of opinion, should cease." And he offered his hand. The Minister could not decline to accept it, and they shook hands. The advance was made by the other gentleman who formed one of the dramatic scene and not by the Minister. The hon. member also informed the House that the Premier, followed by his Ministers, went down in a sort of Chinese procession to meet the members of the co-operative association at a building in Wellington-street. I do not think that an extraordinary thing to do, although I do not know what a Chinese procession is.

Hon. P. Collier: Single file.

The PREMIER: I went, as a matter of fact, in a motor car for I wanted to get back to my office as soon as I could.

Hon. P. Collier: I should think so.

The PREMIER: There is nothing lowering to the head of the Government in going to an important association or body such as this. I was invited to go there to meet the deputation, which wished to place certain matters before me. I was informed that a number of members of the association wished to approach me in regard to certain matters and they said that if it was not inconvenient to me it would be more convenient to them if I were to go down to the building where the conference was being held. I had no objection to doing this. I am always glad to meet my farmer friends. I am quite sure, moreover, that the member for Boulder would be delighted to meet them, since I know that his faith in the advantage to Western Australia from the agricultural industry equals my own. The unfortunate thing about the Farmers' and Settlers' Association is this—I am at liberty to say it, because though once I was a member of that association the other members of it ceased to consider me good enough for them, and now I find myself an independent member of society, but still always desirous to

do everything I possibly can do in the interests of the producers of this country—that the members of that association are too open. Their greatest sin is that they are not afraid to let the public know all that is being done by the association. All their meetings are attended by Press reporters, and everything that occurs at those meetings is given to the public. If the association meetings were held in camera, we would know nothing about them, and we would have heard nothing of the dramatic scene so picturesquely described by the leader of the Opposition. I acknowledge that the farmers are to be congratulated upon not hiding their light under a bushel, on their desire that all their doings and requirements should be universally known.

Mr. Lutey: No doubt the Chamber of Mines and the Chambers of Commerce will follow the farmers' example.

The PREMIER: The Government are told from the other side of the Chamber that they have the support of the Country representatives in this House. The Government are glad and proud to have that support. The Government must have supporters. Yet we are twitted with having supporters.

Hon. P. Collier: The tragedy of the Government consists in the fact that they have not got supporters.

The PREMIER: The hon. member's complaint was that the Government have supporters. I trust that those supporters may be able to give me their continued confidence, and I trust I may be worthy of it, worthy by reason of my efforts to advance this country's interests. The leader of the Opposition said that the farmer's representatives claimed responsibility for the measure for repricing lands. I think the hon. member is right in his explanation that the first repricing measure was introduced by the Government of which he was a member. But that Act was followed by the granting of further relief to our farmers. I know full well that a good deal of the land of this State—I am referring now to poison infested country—was charged at far too high a price to the people who originally took it up. Further, I hold that it is far better for Western Australia if that land is even given to settlers, in preference to its lying idle. The man who reclaims poison infested land and renders it fit to carry stock properly, is a benefactor to the State, and should be assisted and encouraged in every possible manner. The leader of the Opposition stated that the manager of the Agricultural Bank had been asked to be lenient in the matter of requiring payment of interest. I have never heard of that being asked of the manager. But I do believe that where he finds a man bona fide doing his best, if the man is likely to make good eventually, the manager, like the managers of the Associated Banks would do in similar circumstances, is considerate towards that man. Indeed, I know that such is the position taken by the manager of the Agricultural Bank, though, I repeat, he has never been instructed, so far as I am aware, regarding payment of clients' interest.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Why did the Honorary Minister say so?

The PREMIER: I have not heard of any Minister saying so. I do not think the Minister for Industries ever said so. The Government do not instruct the manager in such matters, which are left to his own good sense. When the leader of the Opposition, in his desire to cast ridicule upon the supporters on my right, says

that they cut a sorry figure in the public eye, he is really somewhat hypercritical. The Country representatives, I am quite sure, do their duty by their constituents, and in a measure as great as any attained by other hon. members. Further, the hon. gentleman twitted the National party with the fact that their platform contains a plank that they shall be responsible to their constituents alone. But it is to our constituents alone that we, as individual members of Parliament, are responsible. We are not responsible, as members to anyone else. None but a member's constituents can dismiss him from the representation of his electorate. The members of the Government, of course, are responsible to the country as a whole. It has been said that some promise had been given regarding the handling of the next wheat harvest. I do not know where that idea has sprung from. Certainly, the Honorary Minister for Agriculture made no such promise to the conference which he attended. But let me say explicitly that the Government are entirely favourable to the co-operative movement amongst the farmers. The Government hold that it is in the interests of the farmers that they should co-operate, and that if the farmers are successful the success of Western Australia as a whole must follow. For years I have constantly urged our farmers to co-operate in their own interests. There should be no feeling of jealousy between one farmer and another, since all farmers have the same end in view, namely to produce those things which are necessary to the country. Therefore they can well associate and co-operate, whether they be large farmers or small. I trust, however, the farmers will bear in mind that there are other interests to be considered besides their own. I believe the farmers are broad-minded enough to remember that fact, whilst conserving their particular interests. A great deal of criticism was levelled at the Honorary Minister controlling the department. The Government were told that the Agricultural Department was under the control of an Honorary Minister when it was one of the most important departments of the State. I admit that it is an important department, but I will say that the Honorary Minister has worked late and early to bring about efficiency in that department. Mistakes have been made, but mistakes will always be made in the best of regulated businesses. At the same time I would like to emphasise the fact that the Honorary Minister is most industrious in the work he is carrying out, and I would be sorry to think that this House considered he was incapable of dealing with important matters which come under his notice.

Hon. P. Collier: My main complaint is that he is overloaded with work. In addition to the Agricultural Department he has to administer the Wheat Pool and the Rabbit Department.

The PREMIER: During late years the work of the Rabbit Department has come in for considerable criticism owing to the increase in the rabbit pest. The Wheat Scheme did not exist a few years ago. We have at the same time the Wyndham Freezing Works, but the department has nothing to do in connection with those works just now because they are not yet in operation. They are still under the control of the Minister for Works and it has not yet been decided which Minister will control them when they are completed. We are told that we have not effected any economy in the administration of our departments. We have been told that the Government came into power to effect economies, and that we gave a

pledge to the country that we would square the finances. I never made any such pledge as that. Any man who said that it would be possible to square the finances in war time would make himself ridiculous in the eyes of everyone. The Government knew full well the difficult task they had before them. In the past, Governments always had money in the Treasury and there were many things which it was possible to do. If I had money at my disposal there are many things that I would do to increase the State's production in many directions. Unfortunately, we have not any money at our disposal at the present time. I would like to give hon. members some information with regard to the expenditure in the Agricultural Department during the past few years to show that economies have been effected there. In 1916-17 the expenditure was £106,264 whilst last year it was only £98,314 and that too in spite of the fact that over £5,000 more was spent last year in connection with the destruction of rabbits and other vermin, and that a sum of £7,481 was spent on butter factories more than in the previous year. That shows at any rate that the Government are doing something. We have been told that we are doing nothing to cope with the rabbit menace. We have done a considerable amount as I have shown by the money we spent last year, and at the same time we are doing something to develop some of our producing industries. The total revenue collected by the Agricultural Department last year was £86,146. The gross expenditure as I have stated was £98,314, so that the net cost of this great department to the State was only £12,168. I think that in the present condition of our agricultural development, when there is so much to do, it is a fairly satisfactory position to be able to arrive at the end of the year with a deficiency of only £12,168. In addition economies have been effected in the Agricultural Department by way of salaries to the extent of £2,000 without impairing the efficiency of the department. That is something which shows that the Government are doing their utmost to keep down expenditure. The leader of the Opposition dwelt at considerable length on the question of the increase of rabbits. I am fully aware of the great increase in the pest in our eastern areas. I am also aware that rabbits are known to exist all along our coast from Geraldton southwards, and I want to tell the House that the Agricultural Department has been very active in connection with the destruction of rabbits during the past 12 months or two years. In every case where a family of rabbits has been found to exist in the southern areas, a man has been sent to destroy them, and there are numerous instances throughout the coastal areas where rabbits have been stamped out in this way, and where the inroads will be prevented in the future. The expenditure in the Rabbit Department in 1915 before the Wilson Government came into power was £10,985. In the next year after the advent of the Wilson Government the expenditure increased to £13,518 and in 1917-18 the total was £18,605, so that in spite of the fact that we spent £5,000 more in 1917-18 than in the year before on rabbit destruction, we were able to come out at the end of the year with a net cost to the State for the administration of the whole department of only £12,000. The Government are told that they are allowing the rabbits to over-run the country, that they are allowing things to drift and that they are doing everything they can to ruin the State.

Hon. P. Collier: No one said that.

The PREMIER: It sounded like that. That was the inference to be drawn from the hon. member's remarks.

Hon. P. Collier: What I said was that in spite of your best efforts the country was going to ruin.

The PREMIER: Two years ago after I took charge of the Agricultural Department, and after I got into touch with what was going on, I found that the rabbits were making great inroads into our eastern areas and I at once endeavoured to tackle the question. I did tackle it and I got poison. That had never been done before. The poison was given to the settlers in the eastern districts free of cost and I had every Government dam fenced with wire netting so as to prevent rabbits getting at the water. The wire netting was offered to the settlers themselves in many instances free, to put round the water on their own holdings. For a considerable part of the summer there were men doing nothing else but poisoning rabbits and with excellent results. Unfortunately, however, rains came unusually early and we were unable to get the benefit we would otherwise have derived from this system of poisoning. The hon. member has charged the Government with not acting in connection with these matters at the very outset. I do not wish to be unkind, but it seems to me that the time when these rabbits should have been tackled was when they were just beginning to make their appearance. It was only when the present Government came into power that it was found that the pest had increased to an enormous extent.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister for Agriculture in introducing a Bill in another place gave as his defence that nothing had been done as it was quite recently that the pest had become numerous and were any trouble.

The PREMIER: It was the summer before last when we started upon the campaign against the rabbits in the eastern areas. And as I have already said, we did a great deal to check them at that time, as the hon. member for Toodyay knows. He and others made representations to me and I got an amount specially put on for the purpose. Vermin boards have been established. I want to impress on the land owners that the responsibility rests on their shoulders as much as on the shoulders of the Government. The land owner himself must do something.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Johnston: The land owner on his land, and the Government on their land.

The PREMIER: The land owner must co-operate with the Government, and the Government will co-operate with the land owner. They have to work together. For that purpose 29 vermin boards have been established. Many of them have poison carts and are employing men poisoning rabbits. In other cases roads boards outside of thickly infested country have also formed themselves into vermin boards. If that course had been adopted in those eastern areas in the first instance a good deal more might have been done to prevent the inroad of rabbits. Succeeding Governments in Western Australia have done all they could to cope with the pest for 20 years past. In the first instance they endeavoured to cope with it before there was a rabbit in the country, by putting up expensive fences. To put up further fences at the present time is out of the question, because of wire netting being

something like £100 per mile, even if the wire were procurable, which it is not. Until the time comes when the settler himself will be able to put a rabbit-proof fence round his holding, he will never be safe from rabbits. I hope the time will soon come when every settler will be able to fence his holding, or at least when groups of settlers will be able to fence their collective holdings. To say that the Government are doing nothing in regard to the rabbits is untrue. The Government have been, are doing, and intend to do everything possible in this direction. The hon. member wished to know what the Government are going to do. He informed the House that a deputation had waited upon me. That deputation filled my office, and representations were made to me in regard to rabbits. I told the deputation that I realised the position, that I would go into the matter and inform them what the Government were prepared to do. It meant the expenditure of money. That is one of the great difficulties the Government have at present. Everything the people are urging the Government to do requires money. If we were in the same position as Governments of former days we would be able to do a great deal which to-day is practically impossible. I went into the matter and represented to my colleagues the great risk the country was running from the rabbit invasion. A large number of these infested properties are in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. In my opinion £1,000 spent to-day may save scores of thousands later. We must find the money. I spoke to the Treasurer and put the matter so strongly before him that he said, "Very well, we will take the money from something else in order that we may have it to cope with the rabbit pest." The Government have, therefore, decided to undertake a vigorous campaign against the rabbits on all breeding grounds on Crown lands and abandoned blocks. Poison carts will be procured, and as soon as poison is available the Government will enter upon this work. We expect to have a considerable quantity of poison shortly, and as soon as it arrives work will be vigorously entered upon, and I trust it will have some effect in checking the inroads of the pest. Hon. members must realise that at this time it is difficult to get almost any sort of requirements. It has been most difficult to get the poison necessary for the eradication of rabbits. Some 40,000 lbs. weight of poison has already been distributed free to the settlers in the eastern areas. In view of this, I think it cannot be said that the Government have done nothing. It is the settlers' own fault if they have not made proper use of the poison. The chief inspector of rabbits, who is fully seized of the requirements, is in close touch with these matters and endeavours to see that the work is properly carried out. I can assure hon. members the Government are taking active measures and intend to take even more active measures in future. The hon. member naturally had a great deal to say in regard to the question of repatriation. In dealing with that subject he also dealt with the question of immigration. The question of the repatriation of our soldiers on the land, so far as general repatriation is concerned, is not part of the duty of the State Government. But the duty of settling returned soldiers is part of our duty. The difficulty in the past has been not so much in finding the land as in being assured that those who desired to go on the land were suitable for that occupation. Hon. members should realise that the men who are returning now are

not ex-service men in the ordinary acceptance of the word, but are discharged soldiers, men who are not physically fit to go back to the firing line. If they were, there is not the slightest doubt the Military Department would send them back again. The discharged soldiers remaining here are men who, in the majority of cases, are not physically fit to undertake the arduous work of pioneering on our land. I think every allowance should be made for the Government in regard to this matter when it is looked at from that point of view. I am not going out to the returned soldier to beg him to go on the land. I want for the land men who are not only physically but temperamentally fit for the work, and therefore, in my opinion, it is not the duty of the Government to go and advertise here, there and everywhere, that they are prepared to do this or that. The Lands Department deals with the question of repatriation of men on the land. Some comments were made in regard to recent changes. When I point out the reason for those changes, I am sure hon. members will understand that there was no reflection on the gentlemen previously in charge of the department. I considered it would be a very unwise thing to build up two financial institutions dealing with the question of land settlement. I do not want to build up a second bank at the Lands Department. I wanted to make use of the machinery already in existence here, machinery which had been well tried and which was possessed of all the man power necessary to keep it going. By the man power I mean the inspectors, who were in a position to deal with all the questions connected with the expenditure of money on the land. Consequently, I wanted to get into the Lands Department an officer who was not only closely in touch with the work of the Agricultural Bank, but who had a wide practical experience, a man who, I thought, from his practical experience would be able to deal sympathetically with those men, and a man who might create a link which would connect the Lands Department with the Agricultural Bank. Hence the appointment of Mr. McLarty, to his present position. As hon. members know, Mr. McLarty not only has a practical knowledge of the working of the land, such as the manager of the Agricultural Bank himself has, but he has for a long time been the understudy of the manager of the bank. With the manager of the Agricultural Bank controlling the bank itself, and with his understudy in the Lands Department, I feel confident we shall be able to create a condition of work which will be not only satisfactory to the man who desires to settle on the land, but also satisfactory to the State. When we were asked for a policy in regard to this question, I stated to the country twelve months ago that it was the policy of the Government to encourage production in every possible way, and that it was their intention to assist soldier settlers in going on the land. There are not many men at present who have returned here and desire to go on to the land, but already assistance has been granted to 156 returned soldiers to settle on the land in agricultural areas. Assistance has been granted to men for poultry farming at Osborne Park, and although the Government have been ridiculed for their equipment there I am assured by the officers of the Agricultural Bank that the work has been well carried out, and that everything at those poultry farms is in a satisfactory condition.

Hon. P. Collier: How is the poultry university going on?

The PREMIER: I am not too sure of that.

Hon. P. Collier: They do not like going there; there are only six graduates.

The PREMIER: The Government decided to throw open the Yandanooka estate for soldiers' settlements, and already seven blocks have been selected of somewhere about 1,000 acres each. We are endeavouring to arrange the selection of land in such a way that a man may be able to have a certain amount of sandplain country with good country which requires cultivation.

Hon. P. Collier: At what price is the Yandanooka estate being thrown open for them?

The PREMIER: We have had to write it down a little; I cannot say exactly from memory what the price is.

Hon. P. Collier: The Avondale estate has been fixed at £4.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: That is too high.

The PREMIER: Five blocks at Avondale will be made available for five men. I am desirous of having men who have enlisted from the district to take these blocks. I think this is the best way of dealing with the question. I have got the assistance of the local repatriation committee in this matter, and the settlers in the district are offering every assistance to these men. I am asking the local repatriation committee to nominate settlers for these blocks who they think will be likely to make good. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that the price should be lower. At the same time the Government have brought down by a considerable amount the capital value of the estate to reach the margin of £4.

Hon. P. Collier: It cost five guineas an acre.

The PREMIER: When we say an average of £4 we must also admit that some of it may be more. One property has a house on it, which I suppose is worth £1,000. All the blocks are fenced. There may be one or two fences still to be put up, but it is all cleared. The country is in a forward condition.

Hon. P. Collier: The Government are reserving the block upon which the house is.

The PREMIER: It does not amount to much. There are two other good houses on it beside that one, built of stone and brick. I have been consulting with the people of the district, and have gone over the property. The people there have told me that they too have gone into the matter, and in their opinion, if the average price is £4, the returned soldiers will be able to make good on the land, with the assistance of the settlers themselves. I am endeavouring to bring this about. Payments are to be extended over a period of 40 years, and that, of course, will be of considerable help to the settlers. At the same time it will affect the price. Besides this, the repatriation branch of the Lands Department is also dealing with the question of settling soldiers in some pastoral holdings. I think that is a good idea. When men get an area of about 100,000 acres of suitable land, and the Government are prepared to help them to take up the areas, it must be of great advantage to them. We have two or three men already settled on areas of that description, and I have one or two others whom I hope to settle shortly. It will be realised that the great trouble is money. It has been pointed out that £500 is allotted by the Federal Government for the settlement of each man on the land. This amount is not enough in many cases, and I wish to ask members if they will not agree later on to an amount being set

aside for further assisting people in bona fide cases, in which the Government will run no risk at all. I have at present taken it upon my own shoulders to grant assistance of this description in one or two cases. I am quite sure that the Government have excellent security for the money, and that it will have a beneficial effect. I do believe that everything possible should be done for our returned soldiers. I am anxious to see that our men who come back to us are settled in Western Australia in the best possible way. I do not want men who are not fitted to go on the land. I wish men to go on the land who are physically fitted for the work. A board has been appointed in the Lands Department to pass all these men. Furthermore these men have to get a doctor's certificate to say that they are all right. With regard to the South-West, I have all the faith in that portion of the country that many other hon. members have. Naturally those who represent the South-West are enthusiastic in regard to the development of that portion of the State, and they are quite right in their desires. I believe in spite of the fact that it is so heavily timbered, we have an enormous wealth of timber in that locality which is of inestimable value to Western Australia, and which I think should not be dealt with in the manner of the vandals, but should be protected in every possible way. There is a large area of country which could well be utilised for the settlement of people, without interfering with the best of our timber. Hon. members will recollect that nearly the whole of the South-West has been surveyed into chess-board blocks. In Western Australia one can point to thousands of acres of land which have been surveyed, and which are supposed to be fit for settlement.

Mr. Pickering: Money thrown away.

The PREMIER: A large area of this country is not suitable for settlement. My idea is that in the South-West we should carry on surveys on a system different from that which has been carried out in the past. We should make contour surveys of our creeks right through that country, and survey the blocks that are fit for settlement, giving a frontage to the creeks in every instance and some of the poorer lands on the hills at the back. That is a system I have adopted in regard to that country, and I have already had a number of areas surveyed. There are 150 blocks which have been selected by practical men in one quarter in the South-West, and other areas of this kind will be dealt with as soon as possible. When we come to the question of improved holdings, I think hon. members will realise that it would be very unwise to start working holdings and put up buildings before we are quite sure of the men who are going to settle there. The Government are ready as soon as the men are prepared to go in for the rough work of pioneering, but all the men who now require to take up land want improved properties. In many instances in the South-West it would pay better, where the land is already in large holdings and partly improved, and the country has been ringbarked, and where it would take a small expenditure to clear the land, to purchase some of those properties at a reasonable price rather than go into virgin country and start to clear out the green timber.

Mr. Munzie: By how much are the owners going to increase the price when they know you are after it?

The PREMIER: We do not conduct business in that way.



Mr. Munsie : As soon as they find that you are after it the price will go up 60 per cent.

The PREMIER : We must bring in a measure to deal with that.

Mr. Munsie : The sooner the better.

Mr. Pickering : I hope we shall have it in the new Bill.

The PREMIER : In regard to settlement generally throughout West Australia, I think we have a great area of land along our railways, or at all events within close proximity to the railway system, which will not be properly improved for the next half century unless more people are put upon it. I want to encourage the settlement of land in the vicinity of the railways. It would be better to do that now than to think, even in the near future, of building railways in the far distant places.

Mr. Munsie : Put a tax on the land and give a corresponding reduction in railway freights. That will do some good.

The PREMIER : If we could only get people settled on these lands, we should benefit not alone by their production but also by the freight which would accrue to our railway system. Regarding immigration, the Agent General has had no request to obtain 25,000 immigrants annually for Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : That was stated in the Press by the present Colonial Secretary, who also said that the Government had agreed to it.

The PREMIER : No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : Not the present Government.

Mr. Munsie : That statement has appeared in the "West Australian" with the name of the Colonial Secretary attached.

The PREMIER : In the first place, I would not think of going to the old country at this time to encourage emigration. Indeed, the Imperial Government would resent any endeavour to encourage emigration from Great Britain. Every one in England who is fit to settle on our lands is fit to go to the Front. That is where he is wanted, and that is where he goes. The time may come when we shall be glad to have ex-service men ; that is to say, sound men who have left the service. When those men do come to Western Australia, we shall be able to meet them in every way.

Hon. P. Collier : The statement was made very definitely and specifically by the Agent General, speaking on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Teesdale : That statement has been re-published to-night.

The PREMIER : I have not heard of that statement. Moreover, there was recently some correspondence as to the sending of literature to England to encourage settlement on our lands. I consider that the time has not come for Western Australia to incur expenditure of that kind.

Mr. O'Loughlin : Will you instruct the Agent General to alter that advertisement ?

The PREMIER : The present time is certainly not opportune for going to the expense of printing literature of that kind, and sending it home to England. But we will have that printed matter ready for distribution immediately the proper time has arrived.

Hon. P. Collier : It is not the literature you want, but the land.

The PREMIER : We will have the literature first, and the land afterwards.

Hon. P. Collier : You can get plenty of settlers without literature, so long as you have the land.

Mr. Maley : You have a big job to keep on the land the people who are already there.

The PREMIER : We have, as certain members observe, a very difficult problem in this country. We have not only to keep on the land the men already settled on it, but we have to get more men here. I know well what is taking place in the old country. I have myself lectured with lantern slides, in various parts of England, on the subject of land settlement in Western Australia. On one occasion, when I had addressed about 1,000 people showing them what the country could do and setting the facts clearly before them and telling them the truth, a gentleman came up to me and said, "Well, Mr. Lefroy, at any rate we were very pleased to hear you to-night, and we are glad to think there is a ring of truth in what you have told us." I am aware that matters have frequently been misrepresented to the English people ; but I think those who are largely responsible for the misrepresentation are the agents of the shipping companies.

Hon. P. Collier : But this is a definite statement by our Agent General.

The PREMIER : The shipping companies, being desirous of transporting emigrants to Australia, employ agents throughout England to endeavour to get the people to emigrate to Australia, in order to profit by their passage money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : The Labour Government caused a man in England to get six months' imprisonment for that kind of thing.

The PREMIER : You did ?

Hon. W. C. Angwin : Through the Agent General.

Hon. P. Collier : What about giving the Agent General six months on the charge against him ?

The PREMIER : I have no charge to make against the Agent General. I have given no instructions to the Agent General to state that Western Australia will be able to take 25,000 ex-service men annually.

Hon. P. Collier : That is so ; but the position calls for action with the Agent General at Home now.

Mr. Maley : We shall be able to take those men after the war, if we can get them.

The PREMIER : The leader of the Opposition has dealt with various questions on which his comments can be answered by the Ministers controlling the various departments. I am quite sure the Minister for Works will be able to explain his action regarding the Harvey drainage scheme. The financial position of the country, I know is a serious one ; it continues to give the most serious concern to Ministers. At the same time let me emphasise that although the Government are reputed not to be exercising economy, economy is in fact exercised in every direction. On the other hand, while those economies are in operation and while various amalgamations have taken place, expenditure, through no fault of the Government, inevitably increases in other directions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : Is not the Government's economy principally economy of loan money ?

The PREMIER : No. The Minister for Works will be able to inform the Committee of the number of officers he has been able to dispense with in the Water Supply and Sewerage Department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : What about the Agricultural Department ? That department shows nearly £6,000 more expenditure on revenue account for this year. That is the saving on loan.

The PREMIER : I have already explained the position of the Agricultural Department for last

year and the year before. Last year the actual position was that the net amount which had to be paid over and above revenue collected by the department was only £12,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Last year the Agricultural Department spent £5,956 more than the previous year out of revenue.

The PREMIER: Of course we had to spend a considerable amount on rabbits—£5,000 more this year than last year for the destruction of rabbits. However, all these matters can be discussed when the Estimates are before the House; and I think that is the better course. The leader of the Opposition has criticised the Government in the way which it is only natural to expect; but I can assure the Committee that the Government will be able to show, when the Estimates come down, that there have been economies; and at the same time we shall be able to point out what expenditure has been necessitated in other directions. As hon. members know, many of the departments controlled by the Colonial Secretary are large domestic departments and big spending departments, departments in which it is difficult to decrease expenditure without entirely destroying their usefulness. I do not desire at this late hour to detain the House longer. Other Ministers will deal with various matters raised by the member for Boulder as those Ministers have an opportunity of joining in this debate. I desire that the country should realise that the Government are serious in their endeavours to advance the interests of Western Australia. We are effecting economies as far as it is possible to do so. The financial position of the State is still a cause of grave anxiety. Nevertheless, I do not consider that Western Australia should close her doors against investment or against people desirous of engaging in the industries of this country. The future of Western Australia is bright as regards the agricultural and pastoral districts. Were it not for the war we should, I think, be congratulating each other on the wonderful prospects of our State. Never have we had a better season, or a better outlook, in our agricultural and pastoral areas than we have this year. In the past the pastoral industry has been flourishing whilst agriculture languished, and vice versa. But at present prosperity is general throughout the lands of Western Australia. I am glad to state that the prospects of the harvest are excellent. The crops seem to be free from the diseases which were prevalent a few years back, and which assisted to bring our State into a position of difficulty. Our agricultural areas have been subjected to drought and disease, and our timber industry has been compelled to close down, and the gold mining industry, owing to the enormous increase in the prices of necessary supplies without any increase in the selling price of its product, has not enjoyed so great a measure of prosperity as could be desired. Nevertheless, we may regard the future of Western Australia with confidence, in the faith that the Parliament and the people of this country will be able to raise it out of its present condition. In this regard I have no doubt whatever concerning the Western Australian people.

On motion by Mr. Teesdale, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 29th August, 1918.

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

[For "Question on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

#### Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [4.36]: The Speech of His Excellency the Governor is of the most inordinate length, and to anyone reading it, the Speech would seem to be an attempt to put into the mouth of His Excellency a defence of the Government. It is true that the defence contained in the Speech seems, at any rate to me, to be a very weak defence; but doubtless it is as strong a defence as could possibly be put up. The long-winded Speech contains a great wealth of words and a great poverty of ideas. A Speech of this sort is hardly in accordance with Parliamentary practice either here or in Great Britain. It is not customary that a Governor's Speech should assume the proportions, and even the style, of a policy speech. As a rule, the Governor's Speech is a statement of simple facts, and a list of the Bills to be brought forward during the forthcoming session. This Speech, at any rate in point of length, creates a record for this State in Governors' Speeches. There was one Speech almost as long. It was, I believe, the last Governor's Speech delivered during the regime of the Scaddan Government. That Speech was not quite so lengthy as this one, but I think it was the longest speech on record in the Parliament of Western Australia up to that time. Still, the present Speech has broken all records for length. It is not only in the matter of a Governor's Speech that the present Government have broken the records of the Scaddan Government. They have broken the record of the Scaddan Government in the matter, for instance, of putting up deficits. And they have also broken the records of the Scaddan Government in some other respects. The present Government have followed upon the lines of those parts of the Scaddan Administration which were the most faulty. They have not followed on the lines of any of the good features of the Scaddan Government—and the Scaddan Government had some good features. The Scaddan Government decided to build freezing works. I thought that was one of the greatest mistakes made by them, and I opposed the project. Now the present Government, following upon the same lines, propose to establish freezing works at Fremantle. Surely the delays attendant upon getting to work with the Wyndham undertaking ought to be a warning to the present Government before they embark on a similar enterprise. Besides, when the present Government were in opposi-