

# Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 8th December, 1914.

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

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Bunbury Harbour Board—Amendment of Regulation 93. 2, North Perth Local Health Authority—Amendment of By-laws. 3, Jetties Regulation Act—(a) Suspension of Regulation 24; (b) Amendment of Regulation 4. 4, Port Regulations—Amendments. 5, Police Benefit Fund—Amendment of Regulation 9. 6, West Kimberley Local Health Authority—Amendment of By-laws. 7, Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths Act—Order in Council re entry in register of surname of adopted child. 8, District Fire Brigades Act—Amendment of Rules and Regulations. 9, Health Act, 1912—(a) Model By-laws; (b) Constituting the Peak Hill Board of Health; (c) Amendment of By-laws of Central Board of Health. 10, Swan River Regulations—Amendment. 11, Justices Act, 1911—Amended scale of fees. 12, Order of Supreme Court—Prize Fees Rules. 13, Foreign Tribunals Evidence Act, 1856—Rules. 14, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1912—Visisection regulations. 15, Phillips River Road Board—By-laws. 16, Immigration Department—Annual Report for the year ended 30th June, 1914. 17, Harbour and Light Department—Annual Report for year ended 30th June, 1914. 18, Government Railways and Tramways—Report for the year ended 30th June, 1914. 19, Commissioner of Taxation—Report for year ended 30th June, 1914. 20, Trustees of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery—Report for 1913-14. 21, Life Assurance Companies Act, 1889—Statements of Companies under Section 60.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 3rd December.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [4.35]: It is not my intention to trespass on the time of hon. members to any great extent, and in view of the prevailing atmospheric conditions, I regret very much that I cannot compress my remarks within the very modest limits of time occupied by Mr. Cornell. Personally, I feel a great admiration for Mr. Cornell—

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Oh, he might come again.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I say I feel a great admiration for Mr. Cornell that he should have been able so far to sacrifice himself as to forego the opportunity of delivering his address before so large, so representative, and so fair an audience.

Hon. J. Cornell: It was not my vanity, but the vanity of others.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I regret that Mr. Cornell did not speak because he has placed me in an awkward position. I would not for a moment suggest that he refrained from speaking with that object in view, but my experience is that the Governor's Speech gives the names of the Bills proposed to be submitted to the House. Ministers from time to time give a shadowy idea of what the Bills intend, but it is only when Mr. Cornell gets on his feet that we have the skeleton clothed, and are given an idea of the intentions of his party, and therefore I am speaking under certain disadvantages to-day because had Mr. Cornell spoken, I have no doubt we should have known a great deal more about the Government and their intentions, and of the intentions of the people behind the Government than we have an opportunity of knowing at present.

Hon. J. F. Allen: The skeleton is still in the cupboard.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes, but we shall have to leave it for Mr. Cornell to clothe if he speaks. In the course of the Speech, Ministers appeal for a brief session, and justify it by saying that it

is not intended to introduce any controversial matter. We all know that we have just passed through a general election at which two definite issues were placed before the public. One was the Income Tax War Emergency Bill, and the other was the necessity for clipping the powers of the Legislative Council. I am glad the Premier recognises that although he has been returned to power, the people have spoken against him on both of those issues. Therefore, if they have not been entirely abandoned by the Government they have been at all events withdrawn from the political platform for the time being. In connection with the recent election there is one matter to which I feel bound to refer, and that is the manner in which the rolls were compiled. Some critics might say that as the election was one of members for the Legislative Assembly, surely this is a matter for the Assembly to deal with, but we, just as much as another place, are concerned with the proper administration of the laws that we join with another place in passing. We, as much as another place, are concerned with maintaining the purity of the Electoral Act of this State, and I have no hesitation in deliberately saying that the purity of our electoral system has been disturbed and destroyed by the action taken in connection with the recent election. What was really the position? We have an Electoral Department which is a permanent institution and by no means an inexpensive one. I do not complain that the cost of the department is too high, but it is a considerable expense to the people of this country; it costs something like £8,000 per annum. For the year ended June, 1914, the vote was very considerably increased, because it was recognised that during that period of twelve months the duty of compiling rolls for the ordinary triennial election would fall on the department. It is the chief duty of the Electoral Department to have the rolls in order for the general election. Had some extraordinary general election been sprung upon the country, so that the department had no notice and was not in a position to prepare the rolls, we might

have expected an unsatisfactory position of affairs, but what we had to face was a general election actually falling about two months later than the time of the year at which the previous general election was held, and, as a matter of fact, the financial year covering the extra large vote for the department had expired before there was any thought of war or any thought of drought, or any necessity for extreme economy. The Electoral Department had in hand the work of making a canvass when, all of a sudden, the Government stopped the work, and said some extraordinary method must be adopted for preparing the rolls, in order that the expense of the canvass might be obviated.

Hon. J. Cornell: That was done with the concurrence of the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The hon. member is entirely mistaken. The leader of the Opposition was misled. He was misled to this extent that he was told if the canvass proceeded it would cost £7,000 or £8,000, whereas the Government closed the rolls within two or three weeks' time of the canvass being stopped. Had the canvass proceeded until the rolls were closed, the expense would have been very small, but the leader of the Opposition did not concur in what was done. Two propositions were submitted to the leader of the Opposition to avoid the expense of the canvass. He was asked, "Will you agree to the transferring of names from the Federal rolls, to the State rolls, or assist the Government in passing a Bill providing for compulsory enrolment?" The leader of the Opposition told the Premier he would not agree to the transfer of names from the Federal rolls to the State rolls, because the qualifications were not quite identical. This is an unimportant point, but the important point was that the boundaries were not co-terminous, and there was nothing on the Federal rolls to show for what State electorate any elector would be entitled to be enrolled. The leader of the Opposition said he could not agree to this proposal, and the Government, so far as a compact between the Premier and the leader of the Opposition was concerned,

abandoned that idea altogether, and placed before Parliament a Bill providing for compulsory enrolment. That Bill was passed in another place. It was submitted to this Chamber, and the clauses relating to compulsory enrolment were not altered so far as the Legislative Council was concerned. There was one clause which was altered, and, in the light of what has since occurred, it is significant that the Government dropped the Bill. There was a clause which gave absolute discretion to the electoral registrars to enrol people whether their claims were in order or not—absolute discretion. A claim might have been entirely out of order, but the electoral registrar, not the Chief Electoral Officer, but the electoral registrar in any district, was to be given absolute discretion in the enrolment. Members of this Chamber very properly said—"We will not allow anything of the kind," but insisted that the claim should be in accordance with the Act, and that enrolment should be in accordance with the law. This clause was struck out, and we were told that its excision rendered the measure useless, and the Government dropped the Bill. But for what other reason did the Government drop the Bill: because they suddenly determined to approach the country a month or six weeks earlier than was previously intended, and people would not have had time to comply with the compulsory enrolment provision. The Bill was cast aside; the Government determined to appeal to the country straight away. They closed the rolls within a few weeks of stopping the canvass and instructed the electoral registrar to copy the Commonwealth rolls and to enrol on the State rolls the names of all persons who appeared on the Commonwealth rolls. I hope before long we shall have placed on the Table of the House the correspondence containing the instructions in connection with this matter, because I want to know how it came about that name after name was placed on one, two, three, and sometimes as many as four different rolls, because of those particular instructions. There was nothing to guide the department. It was inevitable that a lot of

names should appear on the wrong rolls, because there are some subdivisions in the Federal electorates which have no existence at all in our State electorates, and there are State electorates which are entirely unrecognised by any roll compiled by the Federal Electoral Department. Now what actually happened was that people were enrolled on one, two, and three and sometimes four rolls, with the result that there were upwards of 20,000 names enrolled over and above the total adult population of the State. Of course, the total adult population of the State is not entitled to vote. There are people receiving the whole of their means of sustenance by aid of the State, and these people are not allowed to vote. Then, notwithstanding the humanitarian principles of our Attorney General, there are still a few people, I understand, in our gaols, and these people are not allowed to vote. But even had everybody been entitled to vote, still these rolls contained upwards of 20,000 names in excess of the total adult population of the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: Do you know of cases of corruption?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I know of cases of corruption. Such cases have been reported to the proper authorities, with a demand that prosecutions should be instituted. I say that this system of enrolling names invited corruption. An hon. member has said that even supposing names were duplicated, there was no harm done so long as the people did not vote twice. The Labour party, which says that it does not matter how you make up your rolls, is the party which deliberately disfranchised 70,000 of the worthiest electors of the Commonwealth for the reason, as the Labour party stated, that the postal vote was liable to abuse. For that reason no person who happened to be sick on polling day should be allowed to vote, in the opinion of the Labour party. The Labour party said that the postal vote was liable to abuse, and that therefore the pioneers of our back country must be disfranchised in hundreds and thousands. And the same people who did that, who disfran-

chised 70,000 electors of the Commonwealth, turn round now and say to us, "It does not matter if you put a man on half a dozen rolls, so long as he does not vote more than once." I say that the system invited abuse, and absolutely did cause abuse.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: Surely we have sins enough of our own, without carrying the sins of other people.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The members of the State Government and the members of the State Labour party supported the action of the Federal Government in abolishing the postal vote system. Hon. members cannot maintain that what the Labour party does in one place is right, but that it is wrong if done in another place. In any case, this system invited abuse, and abuse resulted, as it always will if it is invited. About twelve months ago, I think, a little time after the extraordinary election was held at Geraldton, I referred to the condition of the rolls there. I refer to them again, just as an instance of what has taken place all over the State. I give this particular reference largely because Geraldton is the Colonial Secretary's own town and is the centre of his electoral district, and therefore is the place where above all others he will have the best opportunity for making inquiry. On the Geraldton roll in September, 1913, there were something like 180 names improperly enrolled—enrolled contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Electoral Act, because no residence was given. After a good deal of debate the admission was made that the names in question were improperly enrolled and that the Electoral Act demanded that the address should be given. But what happens? Fresh rolls are issued for Geraldton containing these names without any address—just "John Brown, labourer, Geraldton" and "Tom Jones, Miner, Geraldton"; nothing else. Then the canvass was put in force, and as a result of the canvass these errors were largely cleared up; a number of these names were struck off altogether, while some were included with their proper and complete addresses. In the case of

Geraldton I have been informed on high authority—and I make the statement here as an absolute statement of fact—that the canvass, the compilation of the roll, for Geraldton was actually completed before the Government instructed the Electoral officer to transfer the names from the Federal roll. I say I am informed on high authority that the canvass for the Geraldton roll was absolutely completed in the manner contemplated by the Act before the Government instructed the Electoral Department to transfer these names from the Federal roll. The Electoral Department had no option. They had to do as they were told, and they transferred those names from the Federal roll, with the result that again there appeared on the Geraldton roll, as on other rolls, hundreds of names without any qualification. Our State Act has a schedule to it showing the form in which the enrolment shall take place. That schedule shows that residence, being the one qualification, shall be set out, and says how it shall be set out. The Federal rolls do not contain addresses so far as streets and numbers of houses, where there are numbers, are concerned. They do not contain that information in a great many cases. Under the Federal Electoral Act there is no obligation that they should. In this instance, however, hundreds of names were placed back on the Geraldton roll that had previously been struck off, and, besides, a number of new names without the necessary qualification was added. So far as the Liberal candidate is concerned, I know that he sent out circulars to all persons whose names appeared on the roll, and that no less than 1,000 of these circulars came back to him from the dead letter office. Surely that is sufficient in itself. Residence is the one qualification under our Act. The roll must disclose residence sufficient for the Electoral Registrar to satisfy himself as to where the person lives, and yet a thousand of these circulars were sent back to the Geraldton Liberal candidate from the dead letter office because the addressees could not be found. The hon. member has asked whether I can give one instance of corruption. I will give one. Now, I

want to make a clear division between statements which have been made to me, and facts which I know to be facts. I will give first a statement made to me—a statement which I confirmed as far as I could. It is that a prominent official of the Labour organisation in Geraldton visited Mullewa and induced the people there whose names appeared on the Greenough roll and also on the Geraldton roll to vote for Geraldton on the ground that there was no Labour candidate standing for Greenough. That is a statement made to me, and which I have confirmed as far as I am able. Now I will give a statement of fact which I have absolutely confirmed.

Hon. J. Cornell: Did they vote?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes; they voted.

Hon. J. Cornell: Good luck to them.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The Chief Electoral Officer has the names, and all the facts connected with the matter, in his possession. The information has been supplied to him to my own knowledge. Now what I myself know to have happened is this. Because of the construction of the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway quite a number of Geraldton people removed to Mullewa many months ago. They went out of the Geraldton district into the Greenough district, and they made application to have their names transferred from the Geraldton roll to the Greenough roll, and their names were so transferred. When this instruction was issued by the Government to take the names from the Commonwealth roll and put them on the State roll, the names of the people I refer to were put back on the Geraldton roll because there was nothing in the Commonwealth roll to show to what part of the Dampier electorate these people belonged, except that they belonged to the Geraldton division. The Commonwealth roll does not recognise Greenough as a division, and, therefore, the names of these people were banged back on the Geraldton roll. Now the Chief Electoral Officer has been supplied with the names of people who, having lived in Geraldton, had left Geraldton for Mul-

lewa and were living in Mullewa prior to the election, and had applied to be transferred from the Geraldton to the Greenough roll, and had been so transferred, and yet voted by post for Geraldton instead of voting for Greenough—for the reason, it is stated, that there was no Labour candidate up for Greenough and that there was a Labour candidate up for Geraldton. Now, these facts have been supplied to the Chief Electoral Officer, not within the last few days nor within the last week or two, but, roughly speaking, so far as my memory serves me, about a month ago, and that is the last that I have heard of it. I have no doubt that this is the explanation which will be offered by the voters in question. From what I have been told, I think the explanation they will offer will be that Mr. So-and-so—mentioning the name of a prominent Labour official of Geraldton—told them that they were on the Geraldton roll and that they were entitled to vote for the Labour candidate there. If those voters make that explanation and prove their case, then I hope the Electoral Department will prosecute the man who caused those voters to make the false declaration to the postal vote officer. These are the facts. Those people voted, and the statement is made to me—I have had no opportunity of absolutely proving it—that they were induced by a prominent official of the Labour organisation at Geraldton to vote for the Geraldton electorate. The facts are as I state, and I know the Electoral Department can find out those facts. Those interested in the matter have supplied the facts to the Electoral Department, and have also shown me the facts. I say it is for the department to take the necessary action. In the interests of the community generally, I think, it is desirable that there should be some inquiry by way of a Royal Commission into the methods adopted in the compilation of these rolls. If this kind of thing has been done at the last election, how do we know what is going to be sprung on us next time? Is it a fair thing that the public should have to pay

something like £8,000 a year to maintain an Electoral Department whose chief duty is to furnish a pure and complete roll for an election, and that when an election comes along the people are to be told that any old thing will serve as a roll and that it does not matter how many rolls one person's name appears on so long as we get a roll of some sort? Is that a fair return to the taxpayer whose money is spent for the purpose of obtaining pure and complete rolls?

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Do you favour the elector's right?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I favour sticking to whatever Act we have, and I say there is no great fault to find with our Act. At the same time, I think the elector's right is a good system. My present point, however, is that we have upon the statute book an Electoral Act and that our Electoral Act is a good Act; and what I object to is the abuse of Ministerial authority by overriding the Act and opening the door to corrupt practices of all kinds. I have no hesitation in saying the motive was not a good motive. It was not the desire of the Government that the rolls should be pure, but the contrary was the desire. The very fact that we were asked to pass an amending Bill which destroyed all safeguards and gave absolute discretion to a district electoral registrar to enrol people whether their claims were in order or not, and that when this House struck out that provision the Government abandoned the idea of compulsory enrolment, opened my eyes very clearly to their motive; because this was carrying out the old idea that names should be enrolled whether there was any evidence of qualification or not.

Hon. W. Patrick: And the card system was wiped out.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes, and the card system was wiped out. For ten years, at great expense, the Electoral Department had been trying to complete a perfect card system. What the value of that work to them is now, I do not know. There are names on the rolls in response to the cards, and there are names on the rolls which appeared there before the card

system came into vogue, and there are names on the rolls without any authority but simply because of the dictum of the Minister that they should be put on the State rolls if on the Federal rolls. Great expense must be incurred before we can get a pure and complete roll again. Therefore I say it is the duty of the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the matter thoroughly, so that for the future abuses may be avoided, and so that as far as possible the financial effect of the destruction of the work of the last ten years shall be made as light as possible. I do not intend to refer at length to the speech delivered by Mr. Ardagh. I have consulted *Hansard*, and I find that in the *Hansard* report he is not so definite as he appears to be in the reports published by the Press, and as I understood him to be, in his references to the gold-mining industry. It is far from my intention to belittle any of our industries, but we should look facts in the face. I thought I heard Mr. Ardagh say that the gold yield was showing a satisfactory increase.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: Last month was higher than the previous month.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I think last month's deficiency was a little bit lower than the previous month's. In the month of October the increase in the deficit was £112,000 and in the month of November the increase was only £83,000. That, however, does not go to show that we are making money: it merely shows that we are not losing money quite so fast as before. As a matter of fact, the gold yield for the present year is the lowest for any year since 1898. I say it is the lowest for any year since 1898, and that is 15 years ago. We have to go back in the records 15 years before we can find a year which shows as low a gold yield as the present. It is just as well to look facts squarely in the face. I am at one with my friend in saying that the Government are not doing enough for the gold-mining industry, and that they are doing too much for the gold-mining industry. We saw a little while ago the report that a chairman of directors of one company had said that his company proposed

transferring a large proportion of its capital to one of the other States, because of its fear of hostile legislation. The Government can come forward with assistance to prospectors and small companies, and they can also assist by giving the industry generally some assurance that no attempt will be made to rob it, that the companies will not be asked to pay over 15 per cent. of their profits, some assurance that the mines will not be taken charge of by representatives of unions under the name or guise of check inspectors, some assurance that three shifts a day may be worked where it is necessary. These assurances by the Government are essential, in order that further capital may be brought into the State instead of, as threatened, having portion of the capital already here transferred to other States. Our gold mining industry is declining, and it requires every assistance that can be given it by the Government and Parliament in order to help it on. Personally I am certainly of opinion that there is still a magnificent future before the industry.

Hon. J. Cornell: How is the situation to be improved?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Simply by ceasing the effort to do these restrictive things. If the dominant party in Parliament recognised the rights of those who have invested their money in the industry the situation would be entirely changed.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the health of the miners?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The Government are entitled to look to the health of the miners. They are entitled to look to everything having a bearing on the industry, and to give some consideration also to the interests and rights of investors as well. Turning to the Speech, we find therein the promise of a Bill having for its object the rendering of assistance to settlers suffering from the drought. In the passage of that Bill the Government will have the assistance of members of all sections of the House; but it strikes me as peculiar that, even before doing this, the Government have not taken some steps to remove

the present disabilities which the Government have imposed upon those settlers who are suffering most severely. For instance, there is the increased railway rates on fertilisers. What is the good of talking of assistance for those people when we have imposed heavier burdens on them than they have carried in the past? Then there are the crushing water rates charged to farmers along the pipe line, fees, taxes, and charges, composing in the aggregate a burden which it has been recognised from the first the industry could not possibly pay. What is the use of talking of special assistance for those people when we are grinding them down with charges which they cannot face, which certainly cannot be faced by these farmers in the drier areas? Then there is the question of the reclassification of land. A reclassification board was appointed, and although that board generally endorsed the action of past and present Governments in regard to the prices of land, they also made certain recommendations. Why have those recommendations been ignored? Surely we ought to be just before we are generous, even although our generosity is but another form of justice, because it is something which we have to manifest in the interests of the whole community. It is all the more necessary that these things should be borne in mind when we remember the attitude of the Federal Parliament. Only the other day the Federal Parliament imposed fresh Customs duties increasing the cost of the farmers' boots, of his clothes, of his machinery, of his bags, and of his beer and tobacco—if he has any money for beer and tobacco when his other expenses have been paid. When we know that these extra burdens have been imposed on the farming community, it should be the part of our Government to take off those burdens which they themselves have put on to the farmer. So far as this proposed legislation for assisting farmers is concerned, I do not think there is any doubt that provision will have to be made under which the Government can protect themselves by some security other than that of first mortgage. So long as they insist

on the first mortgage they decline assistance to others than the customers of the Agricultural Bank. For instance, the settlers along the Midland Railway cannot give first mortgages, nor can those who have secured assistance from private banks. The Government should frame some legislation which would enable them to advance on the security of the coming crop which the settler has put in, because it is necessary that the State should take some of the risk. It is only by these means that we can hope to win through. If we take some of the risk there is every reason to hope that we shall win through.

Hon. J. Cornell: Cannot those who have secured the first mortgages take some of the risk?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Some of those people who have been carrying the farmers for so long have reached the limit of their resources. What would be the use of some pettifoggery arrangement by which they would have to take the risk? They have done all they can, and as the assistance is for the State as well as the farmer the only way now is for the State to take the risk. In the year 1902-3 throughout Eastern Australia they had an average crop of about two bushels to the acre—approximately what we will get this year. In the following year the averages in the three States were 17, 18, and 19 bushels. They practically got two years' crop in one, and there is no reason why we should not do the same. If fortunately, this should happen here next year, it will mean an abundance of employment on the farms, on the railways, on the wharves, and in the City, and will, to a large extent, relieve the country from the trouble it is in at the present moment. In this connection it is certainly imperative that immediate steps should be taken to put the Agricultural Bank on a proper footing. I know that in many cases—I do not know whether I am quite right in making the statement general—that up to the present, 50 per cent. of the advances from the Agricultural Bank still remain unpaid. These are actual obligations entered into by the bank,

obligations such as, if private banks refused to meet, they would have to close their doors. These are cases, not of the bank saying "We can only lend you half," but cases in which the bank has said "We will lend you the money you require. Go ahead and do the work." The work has been done, and then the bank has repudiated its responsibility to the extent of 50 per cent. It is a shameful thing that that should go on. The first effort of the Government should have been to put that right. It is also necessary to supply finances to the bank so that it can go on making new advances. We talk about spending money on reproductive works. There is no other means of spending it so well as through the Agricultural Bank, because every pound spent in this way gives employment immediately and for ever afterwards. I should like to touch upon a question of some importance even at the present time, and notwithstanding the condition of our public finances, namely the question of educational facilities afforded to farmers. We have at the University a generously endowed chair of agriculture, but I do not know that that department is doing quite the work it ought to do. During last year we had two farmers' classes and I have no doubt they have been very successful. All those attending the first of those farmers' classes were allowed students' fares on the railways. Then, for some reason or other, these students' fares were suddenly stopped. Notwithstanding that the students were duly enrolled students of the classes they were told that they must pay the full fare. I do not think that is a reasonable way to encourage farmers to give up their time and come to Perth for the purpose of studying, in their own interests, certainly, but in the interests of the State as well. There is another way in which the educational facilities might be extended. A regulation under the Works Department reads—

A certain number of cadets will be received each year into the Public Works and Water Supply Departments. These will be nominated by the faculty of the University. They will receive six months' practical training in



the department, during which time they will be paid a salary by the State, the remaining six months being spent in attending day lectures at the University.

That is an admirable provision, and I believe it is largely availed of by students of engineering to their own and the State's advantage. Could not something of the sort be done in regard to the Agricultural Department? In Sydney they have 11 cadets studying scientific agriculture. These are employees of the Agricultural Department. Seven of these were employed in 1910 at £75 per annum, rising by £25 to £150, and then by £20 up to £200. These are allowed to attend the University lectures in agricultural science and the Senate exempts them from fees. Five of the seven have now obtained their degrees and will be appointed to the scientific staff. Four cadets were appointed last year. They will be allowed to attend lectures and examinations, and must proceed to a degree, and after completion of degree, may be required to serve in any locality in the State for five years. They receive an allowance starting at £60 and increasing by £20 to £200. In Victoria the numbers of students at the University receiving Government assistance for the last three years were respectively 15, 11 and 11. Assistance is given through the Education Department under two headings, (a) competitive scholarships entitling the student to a free course at the University and, where necessary, 10s. per week for keep, and (b) the department formerly nominated certain teachers at half-pay to attend the agricultural curriculum, the students binding themselves thereafter to serve the department for four years. In future the proposal is that a proportion of the students in training at the Teachers' Training College shall take two years of the agricultural course as a preliminary to completing the course for the diploma of education, and certain of those who show special qualification will have their studentship extended so that they may take the degree in agriculture. The number graduating in agriculture at the Melbourne University in the last three years,

namely one, four and 10 were practically all Government students. I think that possibly by combining those forms of assistance a great deal might be done. In many of the wheat-growing States of Canada, the study of scientific agriculture is made compulsory on the school teachers. It might not be wise for us to go to that extent, but I think the faculty of agriculture at the University might be employed for the dual purpose of more thoroughly equipping our school teachers for their work in agricultural centres, and also building up a competent staff of agricultural experts. We are doing exactly this work in connection with the Works Department, and surely we can afford to do it in connection with the industry on which the future of our State depends. There is one paragraph in the Speech in regard to which I shall be glad of further information. It reads—

The Control of Trade in War Time

Act you will be asked to re-enact for a further term.

I cannot find any necessity for its re-enactment.

Hon. J. Cornell: It never would have been enacted if it had not been that a general election was coming on.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I scarcely understand the hon. member. Does he suggest that his Government would not have brought it forward but for the elections? However, my point is that no period was set to the operation of the Act, and therefore I can see no reason for its re-enactment, because without any re-enactment it will still stand. The only section of the Act which might be taken as limiting its operation is Section 3, which reads as follows—

This Act shall have operation only during such period as the Governor may from time to time by proclamation declare, when a state of war exists between the United Kingdom and some other power.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That section should not nullify the Act.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Whether that is the case I do not know. If it is merely to correct an error I have no more to say about it; but it is curious

that we should be asked to re-enact the measure when, on the face of it, it does not require it. If it was no good on the day on which it was passed it is as well that we should know it, and I think in that case there will be a great many sorry that they did not know it before. I wanted to get a copy of this Act, but I was told that the Acts of Parliament of last session were not being bound, and that the only way to get them was to scratch round for different copies and have them bound. I do not like to say anything against any action taken in the sacred name of economy, but if these Acts are worth passing they are worth binding. People of the State have to live under the Acts of Parliament, and it is a great pity that any obstacle should be thrown in the way of their getting hold of them, particularly when some of these Acts contain extraordinary provisions—I am not saying that there is anything wrong about this one, because the circumstances are extraordinary—but when they touch the people in their daily lives it is surely rather a cheese-paring business not to make these Acts available. It is said that there were not many Acts passed, but there were 24 passed last session of last Parliament, which would make a fairly decent book; but it seems that they are going to wait until the end of the session. They might possibly save a few shillings, but I doubt very much whether the saving of that amount would be commensurate with the inconvenience caused to the public. Referring again to the matter of the control of trade in war time I have no hesitation in saying that this Act has been grossly abused. When the Bill was before Parliament the Ministers—both in another place and in this House—told us that the intention was that the Bill should prevent the cornering of foodstuffs. In fact both by the Premier and the Colonial Secretary assurances were given that it should have no other application than that of preventing the cornering of food supplies during war time and that its operations should cease as soon as the British fleet had rendered the seas free for commerce, but the Act has been used for an entirely

different purpose. In the Legislative Assembly the question of the possibility of the Act being used for the detriment of the farming community in connection with the holding of seed wheat was raised, and the Premier was quite specific and clear when he stated that it would not be used in that connection. The assurance of the Premier has, however, been ignored. This has actually happened in connection with farmers who have been holding wheat for seed purposes only. I do not intend to refer to the Marwick case; that has been fully reported; and I do not intend to refer to the Whitfield case which has also been fully reported. Both of these were very harsh cases. In Mr. Marwick's case the Commission apparently made the mistake of taking action against a strong man; Mr. Marwick defied them and proceedings were taken in Perth on the advice of the Attorney General, and later on—again on the advice of the Attorney General—the case was withdrawn. That proceeding was curious to say the least of it, and I will leave the Minister to explain if he wishes to do so. In Mr. Whitfield's instance the case was a still harder one, because it was an attempt to frighten a sick man into parting with his rights. There is another case which has not, to my knowledge, yet been made public. I am in a position to give the particulars of this case to-day. I do not wish to mention any names, as it is possible that the party would not wish his name to be mentioned. The whole facts of the case, however, can readily be corroborated. This gentleman sent in a return as demanded by the Commission, which requested that all farmers should send in a return of the wheat and stocks held by them of more than a given quantity, and this return showed that he had 1,100 bags of wheat. This was in excess of what he actually wanted for his own seed requirements, so that 1,100 bags was the amount in dispute. A little while after he sent in the return a certain miller came to him and demanded that he should sell him his 1,100 bags at the price of 4s. 6d. The miller had apparently been advised by the Commission that this man held wheat, and had apparently been told

that he could get it from this quarter. The man in question thought that 4s. 6d. was an altogether unfair price for his wheat, and so he said he would not let him have it. He therefore refused to hand over the wheat and subsequently came to Perth where he saw a member of the Farmers' Distress Board, which is a Board established for the purpose of giving relief to the farmers—the member of the Board in question being also a member of the particular Commission which is administering the control of the "Trade in War Time Act." The farmer went to that gentleman and sold him the 1,100 bags of wheat for 5s., or 6d. a bag more than the miller attempted to get his wheat at, and 6d. more than the price fixed by the Commission. The Commission had fixed a price of 4s. 6d., and the miller had demanded the man's wheat at that price, but the farmer came down here and sold it to the man who is at once a member of the Royal Commission and a member of the Board which administers relief to the farmers, for a sum of 5s.

Hon. W. Patrick: That would be for the Government.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes, I suppose so. That is not the end of it. When he got back home he found waiting for him a threatening letter from the Commission saying that he would be prosecuted for refusing to sell his wheat to the miller in question. He was also visited by another gentleman—I do not know whether he was a member of the Commission or whether he was a member of the police force. He was, at all events, visited by somebody—and he had sickness in the house at the time, and was very upset in consequence, and did not know what to do. As a result of the visit from this person, however, he begged for a little time to further consider the matter. He came to Perth and saw the gentleman to whom he had sold the wheat at 5s. and asked him if he would agree to let him off his bargain. The gentleman agreed to let him off, and he then went back and handed the wheat over to the miller at the original price. The man therefore lost between £80 and £100 on

the bargain. The State was in danger of being the loser of a quantity of admirable seed wheat which the miller got at 4s. 6d., and which he would have been glad enough to have paid 5s. for, and which he would have paid that for had it not been for the blundering interference of the Royal Commission. But again, that is not the whole story. When the gentleman who had bought the wheat at 5s. found out what had happened he said that he wanted this wheat for seed, and that he could not afford in the interests of the State to let it go to the miller. He approached the farmer whose wheat it had been, and the farmer said that the miller had taken it. The gentleman then said "Will you allow me to get the miller to take a similar quantity of other wheat in place of this particular seed wheat," and the farmer said that he could do what he liked in the matter so far as he was concerned. An exchange was then made of the wheat which had been bought from the farmer at 5s., rebought from him at 4s. 6d., and sold by the miller for 5s., the miller getting the profit instead of the grower. This is the sort of thing which happens when a Commission appointed for specific purposes blunders into things which they do not understand. There is no justification whatever for fixing the price of wheat at 4s. 6d.; in fact the value of wheat—on the parity of London value—was 5s. 4d. in Perth, or 10d. per bushel more than the price fixed by the Commission, and it has been wavering about that price ever since. The mere fact that the Commission had power to fix the price entirely excluded the possibility of anybody making a corner in wheat; nobody would have been foolish enough to have attempted to do so when he knew that the Commission might at any time fix the price over his head, nor has any attempt been made to corner wheat. Several protests have been made against the Commission—or I might say the Government, because the Government would be responsible for whatever was done on the advice of the Commission, and the Government is just as culpable as the Commission—I say that several protests have been made

against the action of the Commission which should have known better than it did.

Hon. W. Patrick: The farmer the hon. member has been speaking about should get his 6d. a bushel back.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: There is not much chance of his getting it back from the miller. Some little time ago there was a very representative meeting of farmers held at Northam in which they protested against the action of the Commission, and gave what appeared to be unanswerable reasons why this fixed price of 4s. 6d. should be removed. As a matter of fact there was no immediate need for the millers to get wheat at present, there being a large quantity of flour in the State at the present time, though I do not know how much? There is, at all events, a supply for several months, and the milling capacity of our mills is more than double the requirements of Western Australia. Furthermore the export of flour is now prohibited. There was no need whatever to drive wheat into the mills, whereas there was every need to leave wheat in the hands of the farmers so that there should be no shortage so far as their seed requirements were concerned. I understand that the protests of the meeting, and the reasons advanced, were forwarded to the Minister in control of this particular department, and they were then sent on to the Premier. That is, I believe, the last that anyone has heard of them. Since then, however, a further threat has been made against those farmers who happened to hold wheat. The threat was in these terms, the letter being sent by the Commission to farmers holding old season's wheat on their farms—

With reference to the stock of wheat held by you I shall be glad if you will fill in the attached form, and return it to me immediately, so that the Commission may know what you propose to do with this wheat.

I have carefully examined the "Control of Trade in War Time Act," and I fail to find any clause which authorises the Com-

mission to demand to know what anybody intends to do with his wheat. The Commission has certainly power to fix the price, and if there is any demand for the article at the price fixed it is competent for the individual who makes the offer to apply to the Attorney General to be allowed to prosecute the man who refuses to make the sale.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: That was only intended to counteract any cornering.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I believe so. The letter goes on to say —

If it is suitable for seed wheat, and you can satisfy the Commission that you will require some or all of it for your own use, the Commission will make no objection to your retaining it, nor will they object to your selling any surplus to your neighbours requiring same. The surplus over your personal requirements must, however, be made available for sale, either as seed or milling wheat. I am authorised to advise you that the Farmers' Assistance Board are prepared to purchase your surplus, either as seed wheat if suitable, or as milling wheat if not suitable for seed, the latter at the price proclaimed by the Commission.

This is an extraordinary feature of the letter. One would have thought that when the Commission had fixed the price the farmers might then expect to get seed at a reasonable figure, but nothing of the kind. Those who are holding wheat are authorised by the Commission to sell wheat to the farmers for seed or to the miller. If they sell it to the farmer they are authorised by the Commission to charge whatever they like. As a matter of fact seed wheat is selling in the country districts to-day for anything between 6s. and 7s. per bushel, according to the variety.

Hon. W. Patrick: Any of the mills will give a man 5s. a bushel.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: But any man who wants to sell to the mills must sell at 4s. 6d.—the price fixed by the Commission. The Board which had been appointed in Victoria to fix the price

found that the price fixed was below the parity of London values, and after a little time they wiped out the price altogether. If the same thing had been done here there would not have been anything happen here. The letter continues—

Unless the surplus over your personal requirements for seed and food is made available for sale, the Commission will enforce the penalties under the Control of Trade in War Time Act.

This is a most impertinent letter and altogether exceeds the authority given to the Commission. The Commission had no power under the Control of Trade in War Time Act to enforce a word of the contents of this letter. The only thing they could do was to fix the price. If anybody demands wheat at the price fixed and a sale is refused then it is that the question should be referred to the Attorney General, and it is for the Attorney General to exercise his discretion before any proceedings are taken. Yet we have this extraordinary action on the part of the Commission. It means that the Commission can force wheat to be sold at much less than its real value. The position is indeed a most unsatisfactory one. It is to be regretted that the Acts are not more generally known. If the Act in question had been known fewer people would have been victimised than have been victimised. A number of weaker persons—weaker financially or because of sickness as in the case I have mentioned—which was not a case of financial weakness—would not have been thrust into the position of sacrificing their small earnings for the present season in this way. In this connection there is one other matter that I will refer to very briefly, and that is in regard to the contracts made for the sale of seed wheat during the months of July, August, and September. It is customary to make these contracts for the sale of wheat in advance for two reasons, namely, from the buyer's point of view in order that he may arrange the necessary freights, and from the seller's point of view in order that he may avoid the double handling, and also the difficul-

ties of finance. What has happened in the present instance? Wheat has been sold at anything from 3s. 3d. to 3s. 7d., the buyer, no doubt, expecting to make a profit on it of 1d. or 2d. per bushel. Because of the war wheat has in London gone up to 6s. 6d. or 5s. 6d. here, or roughly some 2s. more than it was sold at locally. As a result of the drought many of the farmers had not the wheat to supply, and if compelled to pay the 2s. per bushel difference it would involve them in ruin, and incidentally prevent them from carrying out this year's operations. Some of the sales have been made to merchants within the State who in turn had resold, and their interests would of course have to be protected. The Commission should use the power of inquiry which Parliament intended they should exercise. They should make diligent inquiry into all these contracts so that if possible something should be done to relieve the situation, always bearing in mind that the whole of the commerce of our Empire and country is carried on on the basis of good faith and that nothing must be allowed to disturb that good faith. I would point out that in some cases wheat has been sold to London. It has been urged in some quarters that all these contracts should be cancelled. These contracts in London could not be affected by local legislation, and the mere prohibition of export from the Commonwealth did not have the effect of cancelling these contracts. Contracts had also been made for sale locally, the first local buyer had in turn sold to Adelaide and Melbourne, and subsequently on its becoming apparent that the Western Australian harvest would be insufficient for requirements Western Australian millers had repurchased this wheat from the Adelaide and Melbourne buyers. So that the cancellation of the contracts would mean that certain deals would be cancelled, while certain other persons would be compelled to stick to their bargains. In another instance a good deal of wheat was bought to fill a contract for the sale of flour to Egypt and the latter contract contained a

clause which resulted in the prohibition of export cancelling the contract. In that case the man who made the purchase has his good contract standing and a bad contract cancelled. I believe that the Commonwealth, by diligent inquiry, might do something on the lines of Sydney, that is, bring the parties together with a view to breaking down the loss that otherwise must crush a good many of our farming community if contracts are insisted on in their entirety. They should find out exactly what has happened and see what they can do to relieve the unfortunate without doing an injustice to anyone. The first thing to keep in mind must be that the whole of the commercial system is founded on good faith, and it is better that all farmers should suffer than that good faith should be destroyed. The Speech suggests that the session is to be devoted chiefly to finance, and it also says something about controversial matters not being introduced. This seems to be a contradiction in terms. There is nothing so highly controversial as Labour finance, and although I realise that we should not do anything which might embarrass the Government, I do not intend to forego my right to criticise the Government's financial administration. In the opening Speech we have a timely and well-constructed reference to the war and the necessity for public and private sacrifice. We have to translate that into acts. All the authorities at Home, particularly the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd-George) have emphasised the importance of the money power at the present time. He stated that our enemies, as easily as ourselves, could find the first few hundred millions for the war, but he relied on victory by the fact that the enemy would not be able to find the last few hundred millions. In these circumstances does it not behove us to see that these millions which we have to spend are well spent. It would be an act of folly, if not of disloyalty, to waste a penny of that money at a time like the present, and I am going to indicate the way in

which the money is apparently going to be wasted. England is financing other countries in addition to her dominions. We were told that the Imperial Government were lending 18 millions to finance the affairs of the States. Mr. Fisher said that the Imperial Government were going to finance the affairs of the States and he was splitting up the advance so that Western Australia would be fortunate, or unfortunate, enough in many ways to get a great deal more than her share, namely, £3,100,000. There was also an announcement by the Premier that this money was to be spent in certain directions, including the doubling of the expenditure on workers' homes. The next development appears to be a protest from the authorities at Home. When the War Loan was floated in London it was over-subscribed. People were ready to find money and they did not care if it came to Australia, so long as it was spent for war purposes. Mr. Lloyd-George told them that the issue of the war would depend on which side could find the last few hundred millions, and, therefore, subscribers to that loan did not propose that this money should be spent on workers' homes. The Prime Minister had to give an assurance that this 18 millions would be spent for war purposes. Mr. Fisher had to go back on his ideal of financing the war out of revenue, and he declared that it would have to find other means of financing the States. What will the loan from the Federal Government to Western Australia yield us. If we turn to the *Statistical Abstract*, we find that for the past three years we have been borrowing at the rate of three millions per annum—a little more, as a matter of fact, over 10 millions in the three years. This three million loan to the State is paid in monthly instalments over a period of 12 months, commencing in December, so that we shall have a quarter of a million a month for seven months which will mean that instead of a normal loan expenditure of three millions we shall have to come down to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  millions plus,

perhaps, a quarter of a million which we may be able to borrow locally by means of Treasury Bills. We shall thus have two-thirds of the amount which the present Administration has found to be the minimum of its requirements during the past three years. Is it not folly, therefore, to double the expenditure on workers' homes?

Hon. J. Cornell: No one said that.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: The Premier told a deputation that it was the intention of the Government to double the expenditure on workers' homes.

Hon. J. Cornell: You left out the little word "present."

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes, he said double the present expenditure on workers' homes. We all know that there are hundreds of vacant houses in the metropolitan area, and in fact in most other parts of the State at the present time. We all know that the population has shown a tendency to decline. I have no hesitation in saying that if all the workers' homes were put up to auction at the present time they would not bring 75 per cent. of the cost of construction. This is a statement that one cannot prove, but it is a statement that the majority of the people of Western Australia will heartily endorse. At any rate I could invite the hon. Mr. Cornell, who is one of the Labour party who has a worker's home on the leasehold principle, to try and sell it and see whether he could get at the present time more than 75 per cent. of the cost of its construction.

Hon. J. E. Dodd (Honorary Minister): Try and sell any property.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: That is the position. Property is a depreciated asset. Then why go on spending money on it; why spend £100 for something which will not be worth more than £75 when the work is done. There are vacant houses all around Perth. House property generally has depreciated.

Hon. J. E. Dodd (Honorary Minister): You said workers' homes had depreciated 75 per cent.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: That is so, but I say also that the whole of house

property in the metropolitan area has similarly depreciated. That confirms my point. At a time when it is incumbent on us to get every farthing of value, why spend money on something that will not be worth more than 75 per cent. when it is finished? If the money spent in the agricultural areas fails to bring us a return, we, as a State, might as well close up altogether, and there will be no justification for us to draw Parliamentary salaries if the chief industry of the country is going to fail.

Hon. J. E. Dodd (Honorary Minister): If it were not for the mining industry we would be bankrupt altogether.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: We cannot take away any industry without rendering the country liable to become bankrupt. Under the present Administration my fear is that all our industries will not save us from bankruptcy. During the past three years that I have referred to, the Government have borrowed on an average of over three millions a year, and with what result? Up to the end of June before there was a war or a drought what happened? Let us take two cases that ought to tell the tale. If the money has been well spent the revenue ought to be good and the people ought to be prosperous. The Savings Bank figures for the last five years of Liberal administration show that the average excess of deposits over withdrawals was £268,852. For the three years of Labour rule the excess of deposits over withdrawals in the State and Federal Savings Banks combined averaged only £156,265, and the grand total for the whole three years was less by £100,000 than the total for the last year alone of Liberal administration. Does that look as if Labour administration were tending to make the people prosperous? It suggests that the money has not been well spent. Then we have the contradictory statements of the Prime Minister and the Premier regarding the Savings Bank, and I would like to know what has become of the Savings Bank, whether he has given it away as one of the conditions of the loan of that three millions.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He cannot give it away.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH : If the Government intend to give it away I would like to know why they are opening new branches in many places. In Northam, for instance, they took the Savings Bank away from the bank which was acting as agent, and opened a new branch and equipped it in accordance with its requirements, a proper thing to do if they intend that the State shall continue to run the institution but a foolish course if the Savings Bank is to be handed over to the Commonwealth. Let those with sufficient courage now turn to the deficit. For months past the Government have been economising at other people's expense. Since the end of June not one penny of roads board or municipal subsidies has been paid. There is not one local body that is not up to its neck in embarrassment, and the withholding of the subsidies has meant that the employees of these bodies have been turned on to the unemployed market in Perth. Yet the deficit now stands at something over £830,000. These subsidies and other outstandings should be paid. The Government are enjoying a more generous revenue than was ever enjoyed by their predecessors, but the position in which they find themselves is due to a general laxity of administration, and unprofitable trading concerns. On the hustings during the last elections we were told that, except the State steamers, all the trading concerns were paying well. Before Parliament dissolved an attempt was made to get at the balance sheets of those trading concerns. We were told that they were not ready, and when they were audited they would be placed before the public. After the dissolution of Parliament the Press made efforts to get them, and the Premier said, "I do not know whether or not they will be available before the general elections, and I cannot place them before the public until they are audited," but a little while before the general elections took place a pamphlet was issued entitled, "Three years of Labour Government," or something of the kind, and it bore these words, "Authorised by J. Sead-dan." This pamphlet gave what purported to be a statement of the accounts of each of those trading concerns. The

Premier was not able to give the information to Parliament or to the Press because it had not been audited, but he was able to publish the information in a pamphlet authorised by himself. I got a copy of this pamphlet and it was the most misleading document I ever came across. I do not wonder after reading it that it was not supplied for publication in the Press. What do we find when we get the Auditor General's report. We have here a list of them. Of the sixteen trading concerns that have been brought under the Government Trading Concerns Act, the Auditor General pointed out that nine failed to send in any return at all, and of the whole 16 there is not one that has got its return through. Here is a characteristic instance—Boya quarries. I do not know where they are, but I do not suppose they are a gigantic enterprise. There is no doubt that two or three clerks could have made out the accounts easily. This is what the Auditor General states. He is not referring to the accounts of 1913-14, but to the accounts of 1912-13, and he says—

A statement was received on the 21st November, 1913, and returned on the following day, as it was not drawn up in what was considered to be an intelligible manner.

So that these clerks did make up a balance sheet of the Boya quarries, and although it has taken five months to prepare, it was not drawn up in an intelligible manner; but these officers did not despair. An amended statement was prepared, and they took another four months before they handed it in, which was on the 3rd March, 1914. The report says—

An amended statement was received on the 3rd March, 1914, but when an attempt to check was made it was found that the books of the department did not support the statement. Therefore it was returned with a report setting out what was required.

After the two rebuffs the department still persisted in a further endeavour and another return was made out, but they took their time, and on the 23rd October, 1914, seven months later, a statement still further amended was received, and this was sent back for some small amendments



on the 12th November, 1914, and it has not come back yet, apparently. Judging by the time taken in this return, it will be March or April 1915 before the Auditor General will get a statement of the accounts of the Boya quarries for 1912-13, which even then may or may not be correct. Is not the whole position a farce? It is the same with everyone of these concerns. For 1913 there are two or three completed. The Government meat stall accounts have been laid on the Table of the House, and we find that in connection with one or two other accounts the Auditor General abandoned the disagreement and let the report go out for what it was worth, but not one of these accounts has passed the Auditor General for 1913-14. I wonder how long the public are to be humbugged by this state of affairs? The public are the shareholders of these undertakings, and the Government are the directors of these undertakings, and it is obligatory not only in consequence of their position, but it is obligatory on them by Act of Parliament, passed at their own instance, that these accounts shall be furnished within a reasonable time. There is just one other matter to which I wish to refer. The Speech says—

. It is gratifying that at such a time the Commonwealth Government has come to the aid of the individual States and granted financial assistance and security through its Treasury.

What have the Commonwealth done? They have borrowed 10 millions of money from the Associated Banks free of interest and lent it at 4 per cent. to the States. That is the beneficent act that the Federal Government have done, and the directors of the Associated Banks will no doubt in the future be held up to us as the buccaneers of finance with Mr. Fisher as the Fairy God Mother or Santa Claus, but if you take the beard off you will find the same old Shylock. Mr. Fisher in his previous loans to the States has been a veritable Shylock. He has invaded the State savings banks. He has made an assault on the State by the imposition of a land tax, and he has now come on to the State's preserves with

probate and succession duties, which have always been regarded as a matter for the States and not the Commonwealth, and now Mr. Fisher is praised to the skies because he has borrowed 10 million pounds from the Associated Banks, which otherwise would have been available for private circulation. He has borrowed this money without interest, and is lending it to the States at 4 per cent. interest. There was one Government in the Commonwealth that would not have anything to do with Mr. Fisher's money. The Premier of Queensland said, "I do not want your money. I am not going to make sacrifices and promises before I am allowed to take it." It was the two States of New South Wales and Western Australia, where there are labour Governments in power, that swamped up the money, each taking more than their proper share.

Hon. J. Cornell: Foresight.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: It is not a good thing to have to admit that we are so hard up that we must take whatever conditions the lender imposes. The idea is held up that this money will help us to grapple with the unemployed difficulty. I hope the time will come when the unemployed difficulty will be approached from a different point of view than it is at the present time. Eighteen months ago the Government were doing some regrading work at East Perth and paying the men 9s. a day when there was a strike for 10s. a day. The Government said they would not give that amount, that the work was not urgent and that it could rest. Then when the present unemployed difficulty came along people looked about for work to be done. There is always plenty of work, but people went looking about for work and this East Perth railway grading was proposed. The Premier was approached, and he said, "You can have the job at 9s. a day." The unemployed then considered whether they would take the work at 9s. a day or demand 10s. They went to the Premier again, and extracted from him the statement that the work would not be overpaid for at 10s. a day, and then under a sort of promise from the Premier

that he would reconsider the matter they accepted the work at 9s. a day. If this work was worth 9s. a day eighteen months ago, it is not worth 9s. a day to-day. Mr. Underwood has said that the Government would not reduce wages. The Government say that 9s. is the absolute minimum, because that is the least amount a man can live upon. I notice in the same paper in which this announcement is made that application has been made by the unemployed that they should be allowed 7d. a meal by the Government. At present the Government are paying 6d. a meal. If 6d. is enough for a meal and 9s. a day is the minimum wage on which a man can live, how are we to reconcile the two things? If 9s. a day is the minimum, then 6d. a meal is an unfair price to pay. The sooner we face the facts the better. The trouble is not that there is not sufficient work to go round, but our trouble is that there is not sufficient money to pay on the scale that has been paid in the past. We have received a loan on pretty easy terms because throughout the British Empire all forces are being accumulated and used for the purposes of the war. But after the war much capital will have been destroyed, and what is left will have to go to the countries that have been pillaged for building up their industries. Before the dissolution of Parliament certain members said unfairly that I had advocated a reduction of wages. I never did. What I said was that work must be done, and that if there is a reduction of wages let the blame be placed on the right shoulders—those who have dissipated the wealth of the State. The workers may not recognise it, but every pound spent unwisely, whether on works unprofitable in themselves or in the way of paying too much, is a direct attack upon the workers' wages. It means the destruction of that capital which in public or private hands is the condition precedent to wages. Every unwarranted interference with private enterprise has the same effect. I do not think it is necessary for me to add anything further, and I must apologise perhaps for having taken

up so much time on a hot afternoon, but it appeared to me that there were matters of importance on which we must have some debate. All I have to say in conclusion is that none of us can speak in the strain in which I have spoken now without gaining some unpopularity, but I repeat I do not advocate a reduction of wages, but we should insist on getting out of our present trouble creditably by looking the matter fully in the face. There is plenty of work to be done, but there is not enough money with which to do it on the old scale. We shall not emerge with credit from this crisis unless we look facts in the face, translate into actions our protested readiness for self-sacrifice and work as we never worked before to give a greater production from all our industries than ever before in the history of our State.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [5.58]: I shall not detain the House with general criticism, partly because it has been so admirably done by Mr. Colebatch and partly because as I read the Governor's Speech Ministers intend to limit the session as far as possible to finance. Anything else brought in, I understand, will only be in so far as Ministers hope to carry some urgent small matter without serious debate. The session is to be devoted mainly to finance. There is one aspect of the Government's financial administration that Mr. Colebatch has not referred to and that I want to deal with. Ministers, above all individuals, are expected to keep their heads cool in times of excitement; they are expected to take a statesmanlike view of all circumstances that arise, and especially at times of excitement to steer a normal and level-headed course. My main complaint against the present Government is that when dislocations of all affairs—not simply finance, but industry, commerce, and trade—were threatened through the outbreak of the European war, our Government seemed to lose their heads. They proved themselves utterly unequal to the position. They not only decided that it would be useless to go on meeting in Parliament, but said—"We will not trouble

our heads further about finance. We are going to leeward now; well, let things drift; let the half-million deficit go on to a million, we are not greatly concerned." Indeed, but for the interposition of the Imperial Government, the Government of Western Australia would have been entirely on the rocks. I know the State Government are giving all the credit to the Commonwealth Government, no doubt because of a friendly feeling between them, but it was the interposition of the Imperial Government that saved the situation. The Commonwealth Government had to find an enormous amount of money for war expenditure. The Imperial Government stepped in and said—"We will find this money and set free the financial abilities of the Commonwealth and States for home requirements," and to-day we have to thank the Imperial Government for stepping in and saving this State from financial ruin. I repeat that the immediate, the essential, the uppermost duty of the Government in times of stress and trouble is to keep a cool head and, as far as possible, to keep the administration to normal lines. What did the Government do? A great deal of the industry and productive power of this State depended on the Agricultural Bank. In a smaller measure our progress and productiveness depended on the employment found through local governing bodies. What did the Government do? The Government, without any really serious pressure or need, announced not only that the Agricultural Bank would be held up regarding new applications that might be made, but that its contracts, which borrowers had fulfilled—even though the works of these contracts might be completed—would be repudiated to the extent of 50 per cent. No more foolish step could have been taken by the merest novice in finance. The main channel and the soundest channel of the employment of the people was ruthlessly and inconsiderately stopped midway. What was the immediate effect of that? Not only were clients of the Agricultural Bank compelled to fail in their obligations to their

employees, but their whole credit was at stake, and in many cases absolutely ruined. Men who stood well in the community and had given their orders on the Agricultural Bank in all good faith to men who had served them and to storekeepers who had kept them going were compelled to break faith and stand before the community as debtors failing to keep their contracts. That is not the worst of it. Enormous numbers of men were thrown out of employment. Landholders were rendered utterly unable to stay on their holdings and had to go out and search for employment. The men who had been employed by the clients of the Agricultural Bank had to flock down to the City and join the ranks of the unemployed. That was blunder number one on the part of the Government; but that led to another equally serious blunder. The Government said, "Here are a lot of unemployed; we must make work artificially for these unemployed. In order to do it we must get money. Where shall we get it? We will levy a tax, which we will call a war emergency tax for the sake of effect, on the very people whom we have forced to the verge of bankruptcy by stopping the operations of the Agricultural Bank. We will levy a tax on the landholder." They did so; they increased the freights on manures; they reinstalled the terminal charges on agricultural lines; and they brought in a special war tax Bill. The people who had been hardest hit by the blunder of the Government were now asked to provide the money, under the guise of a war tax, to provide employment for the men whom the Government had thrown out of work. It might be taken as an all-round rule that artificially made work is wasteful; relief works are wasteful works. Men who get this relief work have little conscience about it. It is something quite apart from the ordinary law of employment and service. It is semi-charitable, and no man need burst himself at it. I am quoting now the language of a Minister of the Crown in another State. That Minister put an enormous number of men on relief work, and this was his charge—

Now, fellows, I do not want you to burst yourselves, but keep going so that I will not have people coming to me and saying that the money is being wasted.

That is the attitude of the recipients of this semi-charitable employment. I do not blame the present Government solely for the absolute futility of trying to remedy faulty administration by artificially made work for the men who would otherwise have had legitimate employment. Other Governments have made the same blunder. Just look a little more concretely into what has happened. Mr. Colebatch has referred to the work of re-grading. Another work is that clearing at Yandanooka. Anyone who has had to do with the land knows that there is generally no more common source of wasting charity money than in clearing land. I once helped to condone blundering over the unemployed by voting money on work of this sort in another State: £140,000 was spent in clearing land. How was it done? It was not done by the most advanced methods, and not by the best use of the money paid away. As a matter of fact a great deal of it for which ploughs should have been used was done by mattock to make the work go further and so easily were these men employed that to my knowledge employees on an old estate near where the clearing was going on went to their employer and said, "We are going off on Saturday, Sir." "Going off! You have been with me for five years; have you any complaint?" The answer was, "We have no complaint, but we have been looking at the unemployed. Their work is easier and their pay is higher, and we are going for a change." These men left regular employment to go with the unemployed, and I say to Ministers, in all sincerity, that they will find this true in every case. When they have done their utmost to prevent the abuse of semi-charitable employment, these men will turn and rend and abuse them as if they were their enemies instead of friends who had tried to do them a service. It is possible to cultivate the unemployed. I know there are cases of real distress. The best men

in any line may, through sickness, mistake or accident, be thrown out of employment, but the less the State touches artificial methods as a substitute for legitimate normal sources of employment, the better it is for the State. Ministers here are being abused; they were abused yesterday over the clearing work at Yandanooka though it is let at a rate somewhat above what good clearers can do the work for and make good profit out of. I want Ministers to look a little further than these troubles. What will they do with the land when it is cleared? In New South Wales the unemployed cleared an immense estate. When the Government proposed to put them on it, a man of private enterprise came forward and said, "I will lease that estate, and guarantee to employ so much labour to relieve the labour market, and to pay such rates as you propose." "Oh, no!" said the Ministers in reply, "We will do it under Ministerial patronage, and we will put the men on." But see what happened. Soon after these unemployed on relief work had cleared that estate the Government could not get the place leased at what they had been offered for it in its natural condition. Why? Because, with the rainfall there, within two years it was worse to re-clear than it had been originally. The same thing applies to all the clearing done with the £140,000 I quoted. Within two years every gum sapling which had been cut down had six to a dozen suckers 20 feet high, and the re-clearing of that land proved to be as costly as the work had been in the first place.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I should like to sum up my remarks on legitimate employment in contrast with made work under Government in these words. I hold it is the duty of the Government to facilitate to the utmost the enterprise of the people, and thereby to encourage to the utmost legitimate employment. Government employment, in comparison with private employment, will tend to the deterioration of labour. There are men of exceptional quality who will do their ut-

most, no matter who the employer may be. But take the average employee: he is in political employ a vastly different man from what he would be in private employ. How can Ministers in such work as they are providing now for the unemployed, Ministers whose political life depends on conciliating their supporters, get the best service from men employed under such conditions? I say it tends to deterioration of labour, and that will re-act in restriction of employment. The Government can pay 9s. for 5s. worth of work and charge the other 4s. to the general taxpayer. But the private employer can only pay wages out of earnings.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: Where are the employees only doing 5s. worth of work?

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The private employer must have a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, or he will cease to be able to employ any labour. I hold that Government artificial work such as has been resorted to as a remedy for forced unemployment tends to deterioration of labour. Now, I would not have attempted to criticise the Government very strictly to-night if I thought that they had learned the lesson of the recent election; but I am afraid they have not learned that lesson. If the recent election meant anything it meant this: "Let there be no more partisan administration. Drop your futile threatenings of the Legislative Council, and deal fairly in imposing burthens upon the people. But, above all, drop partisan administration." And indeed I think that election meant a little more. I think the results of that election may be interpreted to mean that the Government had gone too far with their socialistic experiments. I fear that the Government have not learned the lesson of that election, because we are now informed that they have launched out as fisho's, Ministerial fisho's.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Bottelo's next.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: They have chartered a fishing boat and opened a fish shop. These gentlemen, no doubt, must be allowed to estimate their own capacities and limitations. If they confess that they are unequal to State-craft, to the real business of administration, and

that they are more at home in supervising little tinkering trades such as the Boya quarries, and meat shops, and a fish shop, well, they have placed themselves in lower roles than any in which I would have been disposed to place them. But, as I have said, they must be allowed to estimate their own capacities and limitations. However, from my point of view, it is a humiliation to the State of Western Australia that Ministers of the Crown should start a fish shop, degrade themselves into fisho's. It is a degradation for the State of Western Australia. By the way, Ministers seem to have gone backward. They have reminded me of a story of a countryman of my father's. That countryman had to go through a wood at night, and as he entered it he suddenly recollected that his father's friend, Casey, had been murdered in that wood. My father's countryman thereupon was seized with a feeling that the murderer was coming up behind him to stab him in the back. What did he do? He walked backwards every step of the way through the wood lest he should be struck in the back. Now Ministers have begun to go backwards. They have gone backward on one of their most important rules of finance. They have admitted that permanent works must be constructed out of loan. They have gone backward on their own meat-cheapening scheme, by a belated taking up of the previous Government's scheme for chilling works at Wyndham. Now, I want Ministers to continue that change of theirs further. I want them to drop their wasteful socialistic experiments. It is an ominous sign that with all their forces of book-keepers, the Government cannot, for 12 or 18 months after the close of the financial year, produce a balance sheet.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Except for the one trip of the "Western Australia."

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The one trip that happened to show a profit, and that trip was returned straightaway. Here we have a Government who last session submitted a Bill calling upon the business men and traders of the State to make monthly statements of profit and

loss, to make them under fearful penalties not only for failure to furnish returns but even for making a mistake. The Controller of Taxation had power to summon all such business men and traders and make them bring their books and all their business details before him, in the case of any deficiency or inaccuracy in their monthly statement. Well, the same Government, with all their accountants and book-keepers, cannot produce a statement for 18 months after the close of the financial year. How would an unfortunate private trader fare if he came before any of the courts of the land and produced his books in the same mess as that in which the books of these State trading concerns have been submitted to the Auditor General? Why, he would be liable to criminal prosecution; and yet these Ministers ask all traders and business men to furnish a monthly statement. I am sure that some of the Ministers are able to appreciate the contradictoriness of their own actions. Now, I will not go beyond direct financial criticism except on two points. One is as regards the matter which has been ably discussed by Mr. Colebatch, namely, the administration of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. Several producers of wheat came to me for my advice in regard to that Act. I said, "By all means make your returns. It is quite right that statistics of production should be as complete as possible." They said, "And how if we are asked to sell at a price we are not willing to take?" I replied, "Take absolutely no notice of such a demand. The Act is such that no Attorney General will dare attempt to enforce it, and, if he did, no court would give effect to it. Take absolutely no notice if they call upon you to sell your wheat." It was never intended by the Legislature that the Royal Commission with the Government behind them, should interfere except by way of taking anti-corner precautions. I wish to tell the Minister that if the Government submit a Bill for an extension of the Act, or for its continuation, it will be the duty of this House to limit the powers of the Com-

mission, and of the Government behind the Commission, to the prevention of corners in trade. This House will not allow any interference with the law of supply and demand. This House will not allow petty interference with the producers of the State. How preposterous, when through an adverse season there is only, say, one-eighth or one-tenth of the yield, to demand that the normal price shall prevail! How preposterous to suggest such a thing, and especially in connection with a product like wheat, whose price must be fixed in the world's market—London! The price cannot possibly be fixed anywhere else. However, this House I am sure will do its duty when the extending Bill comes before it. The only other reference I wish to make is this, and it is really a financial reference. Somebody has started monkeying with the railway time-tables. I do not know who is responsible. I cannot believe that any experienced railway official would be guilty of the silly things—

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: That was done at the request of a deputation, you know.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I cannot believe it. What has been done? The Railway Department have suddenly cut down the railway service to Katanning by half. Katanning had two trains in the 24 hours—a special passenger train by night and a mixed train by day. Both trains were fully employed. In fact, they were unequal to the business at times. Now one of these trains has been cut off at three days' notice. The administrators of the railways evidently forget how all the industries of the people hinge upon means of transit. The butcher, the baker, the storekeeper, everybody has his plans made on the railway time-table. Even when there may be some slight improvement contemplated, it is a moot point whether the troubles and inconveniences involved in a change may not more than off-set such improvement. But when the reduction of the service by one half is contemplated, how disastrous to local industries! It was requested that a deputation be received, but the Minister said, "No, I am too busy." However, later on the Premier consented to

confer with some members of Parliament on the matter. The change referred to was made ten days or a fortnight ago, and on Monday this week another change was made. After the local tradesmen had made arrangements with their employees, had re-arranged their hours of duty, another change was made, and a more preposterous one still—the single train is to leave Perth at half-past three in the afternoon, spoiling a whole day for commercial travellers, not to mention members of Parliament. And we are informed that it will save a few pounds to the department. But that is not the main reason; it will also please a few employees. I have as much consideration for employees as has anyone, but I say the railway service of the State should be run for the whole of the people. What I wish to impress on the Minister is that he should urge on the Commissioner of Railways that all our industries hinge on the railway time-table, and that any change means serious loss and dislocation and dissatisfaction. I hope that Ministers will drop their undue ardour for their own immediate supporters and that they will study the whole of the people, and that above all they will say, "Our primary duty is to facilitate the enterprise of the people and not to enter into competition with that enterprise except when forced to do so by some extraordinary circumstances." Depend upon it, the freest activity of an enterprising people constitutes the soundest basis of prosperity for the nation.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 7.49 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 8th December, 1914.*

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

### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Report on the working of the Government railways and tramways for the year ended June, 1913-14. 2, Report of the Commissioner of Taxation for the year ended June, 1913-14.

By the Attorney General: 1, Rules and regulations connected with the prevention of cruelty to animals. 2, Supreme Court Rules (Foreign Tribunals Evidence Act, 1856). 3, Prize Fees Rules, 1914. 4, "The Justices Act, 1911" (Scale of fees). 5, Amendment to No. 45 of the Regulations of the Education Department.

By the Honorary Minister: 1, Amendment to Clause 1 of Regulations under The District Fire Brigades Act. 2, Order in Council under "The Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Act Amendment Act, 1914." 3, Under "The Health Act, 1911-12"; (a) Model By-Laws; (b) By-Laws of Phillips River Road Board; (c) Establishment of Peak Hill Local Board of Health; (d) Amend-