

sion has just commenced. Despite the difficulties that confront the Government, I trust it will not be long before Parliament will be given an opportunity to tackle the problem and that the whole question will be dealt with finally before the session ends. I trust that the future will see more consideration extended by the Government to the producers. During the past two and a half years, there has not been too much consideration extended to them. Although some measures have been placed before Parliament, in the interests of the producers, the Government can well afford to give further serious consideration to the position of the agricultural industry. Hundreds of settlers have left their properties during the past year and many of them were really good men who would have succeeded had they had a reasonable opportunity to do so. If land settlement is to continue in Western Australia, that condition of affairs will make for difficulties in the future. Should there be a revival of agricultural activities, it may be found that suitable men will be scarce in the future. I trust that the work of the present session will be in the best interests of the taxpayers as a whole, and that the future of the State will be brighter and more prosperous than it has been during the past few years.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1) £2,200,000.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION.

As to Reinstatement of Order.

Message from the Assembly received and read requesting that the consideration of a Bill for an Act relating to the qualification and registration of builders, to constitute a board in relation thereto, and for other purposes connected therewith, which lapsed during last session of Parliament, might be resumed by the Legislative Council.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 6th August, 1935.

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

MOTIONS (2)—CONDOLENCE.

The late Mr. H. A. C. Griffiths, M.L.A., and the late Mr. A. E. Piesse, M.L.A.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.32]: Since the House met last session we have experienced two sad losses. In the death of Messrs. Griffiths and Piesse we have lost two old and valued friends. Mr. Griffiths represented York from 1914 to 1921 and represented Avon from 1924 until his death. Mr. Griffiths was a most conscientious, industrious member of this House. He always had the interests of the State at heart, and I think it will be agreed that he never spared himself in the service of the State. Mr. Piesse succeeded his brother, Mr. F. H. Piesse, in 1909 as member for Katanning. He represented Katanning until 1914, was re-elected in 1930, and held the seat until his death. To those of us who have been in the House for long, long years, the name of Piesse is familiar. Since responsible Government, in 1890, I think there has always been a member of the family either in this House or in another place. The first member of the family to be elected to the Parliament of this State, Mr. F. H. Piesse, whom I remember so well when I entered this House as a young man, he then occupying a seat on the cross-benches, was returned to the first of our Parliaments in 1890. He was appointed a Minister in 1896, and remained in Parliament until 1909. Mr. C. A. Piesse, familiarly and popularly known as Charlie Piesse, was a member of another place for many years. He was

elected in 1894 and held the seat until 1914. Then we had Mr. A. N. Piesse, who represented Toodyay in this House from 1911 till 1924, and at present we have in Parliament Mr. Harold Piesse, a representative of one of the Great Southern Provinces in another place. Our late friend carried on the tradition of the Piesse family, and a very great tradition it is, because those of us who know something of the Great Southern portions of the State are aware how much the development and progress of that part has been due to the energy, activity, optimism and courage of the Piesse family. So our late friend carried on the tradition, and I am sure that the work the Piesse family have done in the public life of the State will not be forgotten. Our late friend was a lovable character; he had no enemies in the world; he was quiet and amiable, always striving to do his best for the people he represented and for the people of the State. Nevertheless, he could be tenacious in fighting for what he believed to be right. With very great regret we have to record his passing. I move—

That this House desires to place upon record its profound sense of the loss sustained in the passing of the late Mr. Harry Albert Craven Griffiths, a member of this House at the time of his death, and that an expression of the sincerest sympathy of members be conveyed to his widow and family by Mr. Speaker.

And that this House desires to place upon record its profound sense of the loss sustained in the passing of the late Mr. Arnold Edmund Piesse, a member of this House at the time of his death, and that an expression of the sincerest sympathy of members be conveyed to his widow and family by Mr. Speaker.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [4.37]: It is my melancholy duty to second the motions moved by the Leader of the House, expressing the sympathy of members in the death of the member for Avon and the member for Katanning. The Grim Reaper has laid a heavy hand on parliamentarians during recent years, and a particularly heavy one during recent months. By the loss of the members with whose relatives we are expressing sympathy to-day, this Parliament has been deprived of the services of two energetic and enthusiastic members. It was my privilege to know the late member for Avon for a quarter of a century, and intimately during the last 10 years since I have been a member of this House,

and I can truthfully say I have never known any parliamentarian who devoted himself so whole-heartedly to his work and the interests of his electorate as did the late Mr. Griffiths. Morning, noon and night, in season and out of season, on Sundays as well as on week days and holidays, all the year round, his energies were devoted to assisting in some way or other some elector or some body of electors. In view of the fact that most of the people he represented in Parliament were agriculturists, it follows that agriculturists throughout the length and breadth of the State, whose interests were identical with those of his electors, have profited more or less as the result of his undoubted energy. In my opinion he set an example of industry to all of us, one that we might emulate. It should be some consolation to his widow and family in their distress to realise that the husband and father retained in a marked degree the respect and esteem of those amongst whom he laboured for so long. I should also like to endorse the remarks which have fallen from the Premier regarding my old friend Mr. Piesse. The tragic suddenness of his death cast a gloom over all of us. As the Premier said, Mr. Piesse was of a lovable disposition. He never did an unkind action and never uttered an unkind word. His was a gentle nature. The Premier has remarked that no fewer than five members of the Piesse family have served the country in a parliamentary capacity. The late Mr. A. E. Piesse did his duty in that respect, as also did his brothers and his nephew. But there were other activities of his outside the parliamentary sphere extending over a lifetime. I refer to the commercial and agricultural realm, particularly in the Great Southern areas, where he did so much. Those are the districts where he will not be forgotten. He was respected and loved by everybody from one end to the other of the Great Southern districts. This was due to his unfailing energy and courtesy, and the kindness with which he treated everybody with whom he came into contact. I join with the Leader of the House and other members in this expression of sympathy with those left to mourn the loss of two useful citizens.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [4.41]: On behalf of members occupying the cross-benches, I desire to express full concurrence with all that has been said by the Leader of the House and by the Acting Leader of

the Opposition regarding the loss of our two members. We desire to convey our sympathy with the relatives, and you, Mr. Speaker, may truthfully say that all of us feel the regret so ably voiced by the Premier.

Question passed: members standing.

LEGISLATURE, CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS.

Reply of Secretary of State for the Dominions.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to advise the House of the receipt of the following letter from the Premier dated the 8th July, 1935:

With further reference to the proposal that certain questions in dispute between the two Houses of Legislature in Western Australia should be referred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council for decision, I now have the honour to advise you that the following reply has been received by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor from the Secretary of State for the Dominions:—

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No. 3 of the 9th January regarding the proposal that certain questions in dispute between the two Houses of Legislature of Western Australia should be referred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council for decision.

I am advised that, provided that both Houses of the Legislature were prepared to concur in the reference, and to arrange for their case to be argued before the Judicial Committee when the reference was heard, and provided that it were clear that the matters in dispute involve constitutional and legal issues and not political issues, the questions at issue would appear to be such as could be made the subject of a special reference to the Judicial Committee under Section 4 of the Judicial Committee Act, 1933.

Further action on your despatch is being deferred pending information on the points mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

QUESTION—FREMANTLE GAOL COSTS.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Agriculture: What is the cost per head for food and clothes only for the inmates of the Fremantle Gaol?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: Cost per head per annum for food for the inmates of the Fremantle prison, £8 6s. 10d.; cost per head per annum for clothing, £4 4s. 7d. The above figures are for the financial year just closed.

QUESTIONS (2)—FREMANTLE BRIDGES.

Traffic Bridge.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, What amount has been expended on the traffic bridge at Fremantle during the last eight years? 2, What amount was expended on the traffic bridge at Fremantle during the year 1934-35?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES (for the Minister for Works) replied: 1, £8,948. 2, £1,775.

Railway Bridge.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What amount has been expended on the railway bridge at Fremantle since its reconstruction after the washaway? 2, What amount was expended on the railway bridge at Fremantle during the year 1934-35?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, From 1st July, 1928, to 30th June, 1935, £6,571. 2, £1,025.

QUESTION—GOLDMINING INDUSTRY.

Cost of Ballot.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON asked the Premier: What was the total expenditure (including officials' salaries and travelling expenses, printing, stationery, etc., and the amount charged for use of Government motor car) in connection with the ballot taken on the 30th March, 1935, to decide whether a 44-hour week or an 88-hour fortnight of 48 hours and 40 hours in alternate weeks, should operate in the goldmining industry?

The PREMIER replied: £398 9s. 8d.

QUESTION—FRUIT FLY.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is the Fruit Fly Advisory Board still functioning? 2, What is being done to prevent a recurrence of fruit fly? 3, Is he aware that the fly has made its appearance as far south as the Porongorups, which are within the Great Southern apple-growing area, thus indicating that it is becoming acclimatised to the colder conditions of the south? 4, Does he intend to re-introduce the Bill passed by the Assembly last session to make the registration of fruit trees mandatory?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes. 2, In addition to the permanent inspectors attached to the depart-

ment, a number of honorary inspectors have been appointed, and it is hoped that the combined efforts of permanent inspectors, honorary inspectors, and fruitgrowers will bring the pest under control. 3, Yes; the infection, however, was very slight, confined to a few summer fruits in an orchard attached to a guest house, and there is practically little likelihood of a recurrence. 4, This is being considered.

QUESTION—SECESSION DELEGATION, COSTS.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: 1, What is the total expenditure incurred to date by the State Treasury for the Secession Delegation? 2, What amounts, if any, have been paid under the following headings, and to what persons: (a) travelling allowances; (b) salary or other allowances; (c) professional fees; (d) hospitality? 3, What is his estimate of the total cost of the delegation by the time the mission is concluded?

The PREMIER replied: The reply is in the nature of a return, as follows:—1, £5,234 0s. 10d. 2, (a) H. K. Watson, £1,022 4s.; J. MacCallum Smith, £1,022 4s.; (b) H. K. Watson (remuneration), £1,709 10s.; (c) Senior Counsel—J. H. Morgan, K.C., £495; Junior Counsel—P. E. Springman, £110; J. E. Rose, £62 17s.; G. E. F. Tebbutt, £27 6s.; total £695 3s.; (d) nil. 3, Expenditure is believed to be complete.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the PREMIER, ordered: That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the PREMIER, ordered: That on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,200,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.5]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolu-

tions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.

Question put and passed.

Message.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

In Committee of Supply.

The House having resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Sleeman in the Chair,

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.6]: I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the service of the year ending the 30th June, 1936, a sum not exceeding £2,200,000.

This is the usual Supply Bill that is introduced at the beginning of each session of Parliament, and it is intended to cover supply from the commencement of the financial year until such time as the Estimates may be brought down. The supply requested covers a period of three months, and that is in conformity with what has been the practice in past years. We require authority from Parliament to expend the money that it is necessary to disburse during those months. I do not think there is any necessity for me to elaborate in explaining how the money is to be expended, because the motion merely contemplates what is always provided at the opening of a new session of Parliament. We request supply for three months because we do not desire to introduce another Supply Bill within a few weeks from now.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

Committee of Ways and Means.

The House having resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. Sleeman in the Chair,

THE PREMIER: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1936, a sum not exceeding £1,300,000 be granted out of Consolidated Revenue, £600,000 from the General Loan Fund, and £300,000 from the

Public Accounts for the purpose of temporary advances to be made by the Treasurer.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

Bill Introduced, etc.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced, passed through all stages, and transmitted to the Council.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr. North, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. J. MacCallum Smith (North Perth) on the ground of urgent public business.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION.

As to Reinstatement of Order.

On motion by Mr. Moloney, ordered: That a message be sent to the Legislative Council to the following effect:—"The Legislative Assembly requests that the consideration of a Bill for an Act relating to the qualification and registration of builders, to constitute a board in relation thereto, and for other purposes connected therewith, which lapsed during the last session of Parliament, may be resumed by the Legislative Council."

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 1st August.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [5.15]: I regret that the Leader of the Opposition is not here this afternoon to resume the debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply to the Speech with which His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor was pleased to open this, the fourth session of the fifteenth Parliament of Western Australia. Nevertheless I rejoice that the hon. member has had opportunity to be present at the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Coronation of His Majesty the King. The hon. member doubtless will have had many opportunities to meet prominent statesmen from all quarters of the Empire, including the Homeland itself, and discussing with them problems of vital importance to this State. I feel sure the information he will have gained as the result

of his trip will be of immense value to him in the important functions of State which, I anticipate, in the ordinary course of events he will be called upon to discharge early next year. Not only as the representative of the State branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association, but as one occupying the important position of Leader of His Majesty's Opposition in this Parliament, he will have been assured of a cordial welcome in London. Such a gathering as he has attended at the heart of the Empire is unique, marking as it does the completion of a quarter of a century's reign of the most respected, the best loved, the most popular and probably one of the greatest kings of the greatest Empire the world has ever known. During that 25 years the Empire has made greater progress in all forms of activity that tend to the wellbeing of the people, in agriculture, in inventions of all sorts, in the arts and sciences, in radio, transport by land, sea and air—in every form we can think of, and to a greater extent than has ever been achieved during a similar period by any other country. Whilst many of us might be inclined to envy the Leader of the Opposition the experience he has had, so long as it is made available for the use of the State, we shall all benefit thereby. I hope he will shortly return invigorated to take part in what promises to be a strenuous and important session of Parliament. I should like to express the pleasure I feel—and in this I am sure I shall be expressing the sentiments of every Parliamentarian—at seeing the Leader of the House once more taking his place, apparently fully restored to his previous robust vigour after the lengthy holiday and sea trip he was able to take towards the end of last year. We missed him from this House last session, and I desire to express the hope that he will long be spared to participate in the deliberations of this Parliament with, I should add, occasional lengthy periods on this side of the Chamber. I desire to congratulate my friend, the Minister for Agriculture, on his elevation to non-ministerial office. It is not given to every Parliamentarian to be promoted to Cabinet rank after serving but two short years as a private member. I am certain the Minister for Agriculture will find the work of his department congenial to him, and I can only hope that his efforts will be fraught with considerable advantage to those thousands of agriculturists who, to an extent, have their welfare fostered by the department. I

am glad that at long last the Labour Party has been able to place its hands on a man to take charge of the important Department of Agriculture, a man who has an agricultural mind and outlook, and I hope the agriculturists of the State will benefit as a result. I also wish to offer my congratulations to the new members for Avon and for South Fremantle upon their election to this House. I am sure they will find here ample scope for their abilities and energies in serving the interests of their electors. May I also express my profound regret at the sudden and serious illness that has overtaken the Minister for Works. I sincerely hope he will be speedily restored to health and be able to take his place in this House once more. The Governor's Speech, like all Governor's Speeches, is not notable for the information it contains; as a matter of fact, I think the Speech on this occasion was rather more stereotyped than usual. It certainly gave us a short recital of some governmental activities sandwiched in between the usual statistics, and it also contained a forecast of some legislation we shall be called upon to consider during the session. The Speech referred to the production of wheat, meat, wool, timber, fruit and gold for the year 1934-35. It is regrettable that our wheat production was so low during that period, but I venture to say that unless wheat production is going to be made more attractive and more profitable it will go even lower still. I do not wish to enlarge upon that at the moment, because I propose to discuss it later on. It is gratifying to know that the numbers of our sheep have increased until to-day they constitute a record; but what is more gratifying is that the record production in wool means that we are producing sheep of greater wool-carrying capacity than we had heretofore. During recent years the average increase has been from 5 lbs. to 8 lbs. The credit for that is due to the owners of the sheep, but I cannot help thinking that the sheep and wool adviser attached to the Department of Agriculture has had a great deal to do with it. That officer has been in close connection, not so much with the big pastoralists as with the small sheep farmers, and has given them excellent advice as to the use of better sires and the bestowing of greater care and attention on the flocks. Generally that officer has given the farmers such valuable information that they have been able largely

to transfer from exclusive wheat growers to being wheat and sheep men. In consequence the increased production of wool per head of sheep during recent years has been very marked. It is unfortunate that our wool prices last year were so low as to be considerably below the cost of producing the wool. However, this year there is promise of an improvement, and I trust it will be maintained. Australia occupies an enviable position in point of sheep and wool, in that while possessing 25 per cent. of the sheep in the world, she produces 34 per cent. of the wool value of the world. I regret the season has opened so inauspiciously in the agricultural and pastoral areas. In practically every district of the State the rainfall has been much below the average and although the prospects in certain portions of the State, particularly the Great Southern areas, are good, I am certain we shall need a very wet September and a very late season throughout the wheat belt to give us anything in the nature of a normal crop. The same thing is going to apply to our wool returns from those districts. I am afraid the wool production next year will not increase in the same ratio as it has achieved during the last year or two, but I hope the season will finish better than it has commenced and that Western Australia's reputation for a reliable rainfall will not be upset. I was glad to note in the Governor's Speech that Parliament will be called upon this session to deal with some important matters, as for instance the Electoral Act, the Aborigines, Rural Rehabilitation and Industrial Arbitration. I regret to note that there is no mention of any legislation that would deal with the organised marketing of our primary products. The question of the organised marketing of those commodities has occupied the minds of thoughtful men, not only in this State, not only in Australia, but throughout the world, for some time past. And it has been made imperative by the intense nationalism of so many countries during recent years, probably a legacy from the war, but it is of vital importance to the primary producers of Australia and to the overseas export trade, by means of which we pay our way. And it is of greater importance to this State than to the other States of Australia, because our export trade is destined to increase at much greater ratio than is that of the Eastern

States, due to the fact that their stage of development is much farther advanced than is ours. This is particularly so in regard to meat. Last year we exported from this State 147,000 lambs, which was a record for us. What is more important still is that the quality of our lambs was amongst the very best that found its way to the British market. And, moreover, 147,000 lambs is nothing to what we can do when we get right down to the development of this industry, as we assuredly will on account of the continued low price of cereals. What we need is a measure of control and organised marketing for all primary products in which the people engaged in their production desire to be brought within the scope of the legislation. It would be a calamity if any constitutional difficulties were to come in the way of the further extension of the beneficial legislation that today applies to dried fruits, dairy products and one or two other things in different parts of Australia. Whilst I would be averse to conceding any further powers to the Commonwealth, I feel it would be necessary at any price to preserve the benefits we have received, and that have been derived from this type of legislation. It would be ruinous, so far as these and some other products are concerned, if we were compelled to return to the chaotic state of affairs that would exist if we went back to the ordinary marketing system as we knew it in the days gone by. What we want is a general Bill to provide for an Act to give the producers a controlling voice in the marketing of the results of their year's labour.

Mr. Nulsen: Would you include wool?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I would include every commodity that the producers of that commodity wished brought under its provisions. If, say, a 66 per cent. majority of the producers of wool desired to be brought within its provisions, I would not be one to deprive them of that privilege.

The Minister for Lands: We had a comprehensive measure along Queensland lines in 1925, but your party defeated it.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am not prepared to contradict the Minister, but I believe, as usual, he is wrong.

The Premier: Usually he is right.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I understand the Bill passed this House, but was defeated in another place.

Mr. Thorn: It was not sufficiently comprehensive.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Since last session we have had by-elections in the South Fremantle and Avon electorates. The results make an interesting study, although I suppose they will not bring anything but a small crumb of comfort to the occupants of the Treasury bench. Political parties are apt to look at by-elections as a political barometer indicating the feelings of the people towards the party in power. This applies particularly to elections that are within a measurable distance of general elections. Some very interesting lessons can be drawn from the results of the South Fremantle and Avon by-elections. Let me take the South Fremantle electorate first. Mr. McCallum's majority of 3,911 in 1933 was reduced to a majority of 738 this year.

The Premier: You will not get much comfort from those figures.

Mr. Wansbrough: What was the percentage of votes cast?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: In case some members opposite may find an excuse for the figures, I will put the matter in another way. In 1933 Mr. McCallum secured 78 per cent. of the total votes polled, whereas the present member secured only 59 per cent. at the by-election this year.

Mr. Cross: You would have got even less than that.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The hon. member would have lost his deposit. This is a tremendous drop in the figures, especially as the electorate has been for many years regarded as a safe Labour seat. It may be said that the ex-member for South Fremantle was a popular personality in the district, and that he polled more than anyone else would have done on that account. That, however, would not be the reason for the large decrease in the Labour majority that was polled quite recently. In any case, it was not very complimentary to the member for South Fremantle, who is also a popular resident of the port, and has been working amongst the electors for many years. It indicates a waning confidence in the present Government on the part of South Fremantle.

The Minister for Justice: When he got to that percentage he knocked off; he did not want any more.

The Premier: You will require greater hopes than that.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will now turn to the Avon electorate, where one of the

most popular, and one of the most hard-working men in the electorate, the late Mr. Griffiths, secured a majority of only 68 over his Labour opponent. That small majority was, however, increased in 1935 to 351 by a man who had never previously contested the seat, although he may have been well known in the locality.

The Premier: Whom do you mean?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The present member for Avon.

The Premier: Was he strongly supported by the P.P.A.?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: All endorsed Country Party candidates are strongly supported by the P.P.A. The one endorsed Labour candidate was also strenuously supported by the Labour Ministry. This result was achieved in spite of the fact that the endorsed Labour candidate was a local resident of long standing, a farmer, and a man who has done excellent service in the electorate for many years, and is probably as well and favourably known as any other resident in the electorate.

The Premier: The influence of the P.P.A. was too strong for us there.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will put it in another way. The Labour majority in South Fremantle dropped to one-fifth of its former percentage, and the Country Party majority in the Avon election increased by 500 per cent.—all in two years.

The Premier: Wonderful! What are the figures for the previous election? They do not suit you.

The Minister for Water Supplies: You have not mentioned Carnarvon yet.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The results of those two elections clearly indicate the feelings of the people towards the present Government. I venture to say that the same result would be achieved in any electorate that was asked to express a similar opinion. One need not be surprised at that, because the Government have lamentably failed to carry out the trust imposed upon them by the people in 1933. At the last general election the question of unemployment loomed largely in the minds of the electors. The solution of that problem was the principal argument advanced by members of the present Government and Labour candidates generally as a means of working their way to the Treasury bench. Thousands of electors thought it possible that their jobs might be in jeopardy if the depression continued for an indefinite term. They there-

fore fell before the specious arguments advanced by the Premier and his colleagues, and by Labour candidates generally.

The Premier: What about your statements at the previous election?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: These truths are unpalatable to the Premier, but he must take his gruel.

The Premier: I will take it all right.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: A great show was made by Labour candidates of the promise that a full-time Minister for Employment would be appointed if a Labour Government were returned to office. When he took office the present Minister for Employment was allotted that portfolio. Notwithstanding his many absences from the State, and remembering also that the Deputy Premier, Mr. McCallum, was absent from his office for long periods attending Premiers' conferences in the Eastern States, owing to the regrettable illness of the Premier himself, we find—

The Premier: He did not attend one Premiers' conference during the time I was ill.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Deputy Premier attended more than one conference.

The Premier: Not during that period.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: He attended several conferences in the Eastern States during the Premier's illness.

The Premier: You are wrong.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If they were not Premiers' conferences they were Ministerial conferences of some sort.

The Premier: Not one.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: On numerous occasions the present Minister for Works was given charge of the Public Works Department because the Minister himself was unable to attend his office. He was compelled to take on the work of the Premier's Department because of the absence of the Premier through illness.

The Premier: That is an absolute misstatement of fact.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will prove to the Premier that he is wrong.

The Premier: You ought to get somewhere near the truth.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Notwithstanding that the full-time Minister for Employment could be transferred to the Public Works Department during the absence of the Minister for Works—the Premier will not deny that statement—we find that he also had time to attend to the unemployment side of his work, although the Public Works

Department is one of the most important in the service.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Another Minister took on that job.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: This clearly indicates there was no real necessity for employing a full-time Minister for Employment.

The Premier: Why do you not try to get your facts right?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will prove how absolutely unnecessary it was for a full-time Minister for Employment to be appointed. The present Minister has now been appointed Minister for Works, Minister for Employment, Minister for Labour, Minister for Child Welfare, Minister for Industrial Development, and Minister for Australian Labour Unity. There never was any justification for the employment of a full-time Minister for Employment. The present Minister could have done the job just as well as the previous Minister did it.

Mr. Wilson: He did not do too well.

The Minister for Justice: The present Minister did immeasurably better.

The Premier: Those are poor old grounds.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Members of the present Ministry and their supporters have compared the achievements of the present Government with the work of the Mitchell Administration. The terms of the Collier and the Mitchell Governments were entirely dissimilar. The Mitchell Government had little or no money with which to carry on. Their loan funds had been curtailed, and their revenue was restricted. In the early days of the term of that Government, unemployment in industry increased considerably. It was necessary for them to bring in rigid administrative economy. This all tended to make the Government of the day unpopular. On top of that we had the extravagant promises of members of the present Ministry concerning what they would do to relieve unemployment.

The Premier: There were no extravagant promises.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: No wonder the Mitchell Government became unpopular. They were defeated because everything was against them. I will prove that statement.

The Premier: Do not forget your own extravagant promises.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have never made any promises in my life.

The Premier: The Government of which you were a member did so.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The member for Brownhill-Ivanhoe, in moving the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply, made a speech that was a model of moderation and thoughtfulness. It was, however, impaired by a clumsy juggling of the figures relative to finance and unemployment. He made an attempt to justify his Government, and he lauded their achievements to the skies. The hon. member really did not do himself justice. He omitted to mention that the revenue received by the present Government was infinitely greater than that received by the Mitchell Government. He also omitted to say that had the previous Government received revenue to the extent received by the Government now in office, the deficit would have been reduced accordingly.

The Premier: Surely you know that increased revenue means increased expenditure!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will give the Premier the figures. Let him not be in such a darned hurry. This is what the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe said—

But when we add the deficits and the loan expenditure of the previous Administration, and add the deficits, actual and estimated, and the loan expenditure of the present Administration together, and then subtract one from the other, we find that the present Government had money available to them to the extent of only £144,000 more than the previous Government.

And the way he arrived at that was by adding the loan expenditure to the deficit. He forgot all about the fact that the Government had a million a year more in revenue than the previous Government received. The figures are not as the hon. member stated.

The Premier: You do not understand figures; you know nothing about them.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: I was speaking of loan expenditure.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The hon. member interjects that he was speaking of loan expenditure. He was speaking of money which the two Governments had to spend. He never mentioned loan expenditure; he said that the present Government had money available to the extent of only £144,000 more than the previous Government. Let us see what the actual figures are. According to the present Government and their supporters, something wonderful has

been achieved in the relief of unemployment. But what has actually been done is not as wonderful as would appear on the surface. If the Government have done something to relieve unemployment, it is because they had ample funds with which to do so. It is surprising that they did not do a jolly sight more than they have actually done. I have some figures relating to average annual expenditure from loan and revenue accounts for the periods during which the present Government were in power, 1924-30 and 1933-35, and the period during which the Mitchell Government were in power, 1930-33. Those figures will entirely disprove the present Government's claim that they have achieved something. I do not set myself up as an adept at figures, but I intend to put before members just plain unvarnished facts which were not given by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe last week.

The Premier: A statement of figures you do not understand.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The figures I intend to quote were supplied by the Treasury to the Government Statistician and issued by that officer in the Financial Statement.

The Premier: But you do not know how to read them.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If there is anything wrong in those figures, I shall not be expected to accept responsibility. The figures disclose the true position regarding moneys available for expenditure. With the exception of a few special grants from the Commonwealth and which, as far as I am aware, are not shown, the only money the Government of the day can have available is that provided from loan account and revenue account, plus any deficit that may exist. The first period to which I intend to refer is the six-year term, 1924-30, when the present Government were in power. The average annual expenditure from loan account for that period was £4,173,000, and the average annual expenditure from revenue account, plus deficit, was £9,566,000, or a total average annual expenditure, including loan, revenue and deficits, of £13,739,000. Now let us take the three-year period of the Mitchell Administration, 1930-33. The average annual expenditure from loan account was £1,786,000, and the average annual expenditure from revenue account, plus deficits, was

£9,632,000, or a total of £11,418,000. Now let us take the two years 1933-35 of the present Labour administration, and in this connection, while I have the actual figures of the average annual expenditure from loan account for 1933-34, I am compelled to take the Treasurer's estimate for the year 1934-35, because the figures of the actual expenditure have not yet been published. The actual expenditure during 1933-34 and the Treasurer's estimate for 1934-35 taken together give an average annual expenditure from loan account of £2,903,000, and from revenue account, including deficits, £9,385,000, or a total average annual expenditure, including loan, revenue, and deficits, of £12,288,000. I should like to mention that I have omitted the odd hundreds merely for the sake of convenience.

The Premier: Where did you get those figures?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Almost entirely from the Financial Statement.

The Premier: Not entirely.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have just told the Premier that I was forced to take his estimate of the expenditure from loan account for the year 1934-35, because the figures were not available. In the period of the Mitchell administration, 1930-33, we find that the average annual expenditure was £2,321,000 less than that for the 1924-30 period, and £870,000 less than the expenditure for 1933-35 period.

Mr. Cross interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If hon. members would only allow me to proceed, I could make better progress. I ask members not to interject, because the figures I am quoting will not convey anything if I am subjected to a fusillade of interjections. In addition to the average of £870,000 per annum which has been expended by the present Government over and above the average of the Mitchell Government, they have also received from the Federal Government during the year 1934-35 £125,000 for country water supplies, £100,000 for the encouragement of reforestation, and £60,000 for assistance to mining. It all goes to show that the present Government have been specially favoured.

The Premier: What nonsense you are talking!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Government also received during 1933-35 an average of £77,000 per annum more in respect of road grants than was received in the period 1930-33. In the latter term the average receipts were £366,000, whilst in the 1933-35 period the figure was £453,000.

The Premier: No one had any confidence in your Government.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: And there is very little confidence in yours. The £77,000 over and above the other figures I have quoted clearly indicates that the present Government have had a great deal more than the £144,000 per annum referred to by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe. As a matter of fact, the average annual expenditure for 1933-35 exceeds the average annual expenditure in the period 1930-33 by no less a sum than £1,090,000. There is a vast difference between that total and the £144,000 stated by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe. The figures I have quoted cannot be controverted.

The Premier: You cannot get away with that balderdash.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The hon. gentleman cannot fool all the people all the time; it is no use the Premier trying to bluff his way through in that manner. I have proved definitely that the statement made by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe is incorrect, and I have shown what the actual position is. The hon. member omitted to mention an important item of revenue, and what is more now, the denials by the Premier will not get him anywhere.

The Premier: Won't they? I will give you the truth.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The £1,090,000 per annum would be sufficient to provide full-time employment at the basic wage for 5,900 men.

The Minister for Agriculture: You omitted to add the amount of £1,300,000 given by the Commonwealth to assist wheat-growers.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The facetiousness of the hon. member will not get him anywhere.

The Premier: Anyway, they kicked you out.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The electors have a habit of doing that periodically, and I have no doubt at the next elections history

will repeat itself. But I hope the Premier will allow me to proceed. I want to see that the improvement in the employment position for which the Government takes credit is general throughout Australia. But this improvement is not confined to Western Australia; it is general, and has been brought about by increased loan expenditure and, as far as Western Australia is concerned, by the greatly increased activity in our mining areas. It is fortunate that the auriferous belt of Western Australia has again come to the assistance of the State at a time when we needed it most, and I hope sincerely that it will continue. It is not any miraculous act of the present Government that has brought about the improvement in the unemployment position.

The Premier: Had our policy of providing for 2,000 men on prospecting nothing to do with it?

Mr. Patrick: You increased the price of gold, too!

The Premier: We made the industry.

The Minister for Lands: You did not make it.

Mr. Moloney: Who helped Wiluna?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Governor's Speech included the following paragraph:—

I am glad to be able to note a continued improvement in employment. At the end of June last year there were 11,175 persons either receiving sustenance or Government relief work as against 9,173 for June of this year. The fact that over 2,000 persons have thus been absorbed in industry in 12 months is a gratifying indication of a trend towards a solution of the present unemployment problem.

I am pleased that His Excellency gave those figures, because I now have information that was not previously in my possession. They are more up-to-date than any figures I could obtain. It is not easy to get figures dealing with the unemployment position. We can only use those figures published by the Press periodically when somebody in authority, such as the Premier, the Minister for Works, or the Minister for Employment makes them available. I have some figures I wish to give to the House, because they really indicate that the improvement in the unemployment position started long before the present Government assumed office.

Mr. Moloney: That is a good one!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If the member for Subiaco is open to be convinced, these figures will convince him. They are not my figures; they have been quoted from

time to time by the Minister for Employment, and, as I have mentioned, the latest figures are given in the Governor's Speech. The number of men on sustenance and relief work in July, 1932, was 16,015. I do not know whether any member wishes to deny the accuracy of that total. In April, 1933, when the change of Government took place, the number of men on sustenance and relief work was 13,400 showing a drop of 2,615 in the last nine months of the Mitchell Government's term of office. In October, 1934, or 18 months after the present Government took control, there were 10,197 men on sustenance and relief work, showing a drop of 3,203 in 18 months. In June, 1935—these are the figures contained in the Speech—the number of men on sustenance and relief work was 9,173, a drop of 1,024 in the last nine months. Those figures prove clearly that the drop was greater during the last nine months of the Mitchell Government's administration than it has been since. Yet members of the Labour Party go into the country and declare that they are the ones who have solved the unemployed problem. It has been mighty difficult for me to get comparative figures at certain dates, but the figures I have quoted have been given to the public. The drop in unemployment during the last nine months of the Mitchell Administration was 2,615, and the drop in the last nine months of the Collier Administration has been 1,024. The drop was 155 per cent. more in the last nine months of the Mitchell Government's term than in the last nine months of the present Government's term.

Mr. Moloney: Where did you get the figures?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: They have been given from time to time by the Minister for Employment.

The Premier: But they are not comparable. It is a black fellow's comparison.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: All around the Chamber I was met with contradictions, and now that I have given the figures, the Premier says they are not comparable. Every supporter of the Labour Government goes out into the country and makes comparisons of the position during the Mitchell Government's term of office and the present Government's term of office. The fact remains that the position started to improve before the present Government took office, notwithstanding that the Mitchell Govern-

ment had over £1,000,000 less money to spend.

The Premier: You set the train?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Yes, nine months before we left office.

The Premier: You laid the foundations?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Yes. Unfortunately the present Government seem to be mainly concerned to provide jobs for metropolitan trade unionists, and are not vitally concerned whether the work to which they are putting men is justified or not. It is of no use giving men employment, just to enable the Government to say that they have partially solved the unemployment problem, if the work is of no value to the State. I should like to give an instance that has come under my notice. I know of an abandoned Agricultural Bank farm on which a sustenance man was placed as caretaker. The man had a wife and three children, and I understand he was in receipt of 35s. a week. I am not complaining about that; it is only right that the assets of the State—and several thousand pounds worth are represented on that farm—should be maintained. That caretaker should have been given the job of poisoning the vermin on the property. He could easily have done it; he knew how to do it, and he had ample time in which to do it. Such an arrangement would not suit the present Government. That is not their way of solving the unemployment problem.

The Minister for Lands: Who is the man?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Government sent a man from Perth to poison the rabbits on that farm.

The Minister for Lands: Who is the man?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: They paid his fare from Perth, but the man had never seen a poison cart in his life and had never mixed a poison bait in his life. Although he had spent some time in the Old Country trapping rabbits on Lord Somebody's property, he had never been into the country of Western Australia and he knew nothing at all about the job.

The Premier: Did the Government deal with that individual or did officers of the Government handle the whole matter? It is ridiculous to put on the Government responsibility for some individual going here and there to poison rabbits.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The sustenance man on the farm could easily have done the job. Such a policy, however, does not suit the Government. They issue instructions; good.

unionists of the metropolitan area have to be found jobs, and they are sent all over the country to do such jobs, and the work is not worth while because the value they return is not there.

The Minister for Lands: Give the name of the farmer.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I will not give the name.

The Premier: Who were the Ministers who dealt with the matter? Ministers have something to do other than to deal with individuals poisoning rabbits.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am pleased that the figures I submitted have so excited the Government that they are unable calmly to contemplate the position. It is not unusual for a man to make a row when facts are quoted that hurt him.

Miss Holman: You have been making a big row.

The Premier: About one man sent to poison a rabbit. Such a big question!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Some years ago Parliament enacted legislation providing for the settlement of industrial disputes by arbitration. This type of legislation has always been regarded as the pet of the Labour Party. Under that legislation a court was set up to deal with industrial disputes, the court consisting of a President, a representative of the employers and a representative of the employees. Labour Ministers and Labour members generally on various occasions have proclaimed from the housetops their policy that all conditions of employment should be fixed by the Arbitration Court. During the course of the greatest crisis in the State's history, the Parliament of the country, the highest tribunal in the land, deemed it necessary in the interests of the State to make certain wage and salary deductions. Reductions were made in every State of the Commonwealth. In this State the proposals were strongly opposed by members of the present Government when sitting in Opposition. They proclaimed as their policy that all such matters should be adjusted by the tribunal that had been set up under arbitration legislation. Mr. McCallum, the strong man of the Labour Party at the time, speaking on the second reading of the Financial Emergency Bill in 1931 said—

This Bill is a definite attack on the Arbitration Court. It is the first time in this country that any attempt has been made de-

liberately to undermine the authority of that tribunal. Up to now political parties have held that the fixation of wages has been a responsibility of the court. Members opposite, especially those representing metropolitan constituencies, at the last general election said that wages would not be interfered with by members of Parliament, but would be left to the jurisdiction of the court. That is the stand that was taken at the conference. Despite that, the Government of this State bring down a Bill to attack the very basis of the court's authority. It can no longer be argued that the deciding authority for the fixation of wages will be the Arbitration Court.

I should like members to note that last sentence particularly.

Are we in Parliament in a position intelligently to decide what the basic wage should be, what the standard of living should be? We have not the information, and we have not the facilities or the power to make the investigation. We clothe the court with that power; we give it the facilities and the authority. This Bill strikes at the fundamentals of the whole position. The Government say, "No longer shall that tribunal have a say in the matter, but Parliament shall have the authority to fix wages."

It was during the greatest crisis in the State's history that Parliament, which is higher than the Arbitration Court and higher than any other body in the land, decided to impose the reductions.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Generally I agree that the terms and conditions of employment should be left to the Arbitration Court. They always have been so left, except in the case of the difficult financial emergency that came upon us suddenly a few years ago, and then they were altered only by Parliament, the highest tribunal in the land. And I venture to say they would not have been interfered with by Parliament had it not been that this State and the other States in Australia were passing through so grave a crisis that they did not know what the future held for them. Now let us see what the present Government have done to make the arbitration laws in this country inoperative. Recently the A.W.U. on the goldfields appealed to the Arbitration Court for certain alterations in the award under which the mining industry was carried on. The court considered the case and delivered judgment. Incidentally, they granted most of the requests of the union, but that is not material. Amongst other things, the

court decided that the employers should have the option of working alternatively a 40-48 hour week—88 hours per fortnight—instead of 44 hours weekly. The union was dissatisfied with the award in that respect and the result was a strike. Unfortunately, Ministers of the Crown aided and abetted the miners in that strike. I hate strikes at any time, but I hate them all the more when responsible Ministers of the Crown actually take part in them, or assist those taking part in them. Notwithstanding that Ministers are sworn to uphold the law, we find that the head of the Government and some of his senior Ministers went up to the gold-fields and assisted the strikers in the illegal attitude they adopted.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Did that actually take place?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: They held the gun at the head of the mining companies and forced them to accept the decision of a ballot in reference to the hours to be worked. I should like here to read the following paragraph from the annual report of the president of the Chamber of Mines in regard to this matter. He said—

In 1934 the Australian Workers' Union applied to the State Court of Arbitration for a new award to govern the gold mining industry. Late in December the award was delivered, fixing the minimum wage at 15s. 8d. per shift. This meant that the lowest paid underground worker received, with all allowances, 16s. 8d. per shift—a rise of 1s. 10d. per shift above the previous award. The surface hours were reduced from 48 to 44 per week. Underground hours remained unchanged at 44 per week, but the companies were given the right to work 48 hours one week and 40 hours the next week. All members of the Chamber of Mines exercised this right, but the A.W.U. refused to observe the award in this principle and adopted the illegal method of a strike. The strike lasted for a period of six weeks, causing a loss of wages to the men of over £200,000, a loss of production by the mines of over £500,000, besides very heavy overhead and maintenance expenditure. This deplorable loss to all concerned could have been avoided if the A.W.U. had adopted the constitutional method of approaching the Arbitration Court. The men resumed work on the 40-48 hour fortnight on the understanding that a ballot would be taken of members of the A.W.U. only, within six weeks as to whether the 44-hour week or the 88-hour fortnight should be worked. The subsequent ballot resulted in a large majority voting for the working of 44 hours each week. All mine workers are in a position to know that the Saturday short shift of four hours is very uneconomical, especially on large mines. The alternate 40-48 hour week would do away with this costly shift, besides giving to each

worker a long week-end off every fortnight, which would be of considerable benefit to the workers—both physically and socially. Despite this knowledge, the workers, backed up by their union, took the law into their own hands and refused to accept the terms of the award. The alternate-hours system did not call upon the worker for sacrifice in either money or time. In fact, the award increased wages on the surface 8s. and underground 11s. per week. By the exercise of force, the workers were able to defy the law, and the employers were compelled to increase their working costs.

Mr. Moloney: Where is that to be found?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: That is an extract from the annual report of the president of the Chamber of Mines and was published in the "West Australian" of the 15th May, 1935. I want also to read the following extract from a letter from the Chamber of Mines to the Premier, which was published in the "West Australian" of the 18th February last:—

Referring to the many interviews which have taken place during the dispute between the sub-committee of your Cabinet and the special committee of the Chamber of Mines, I am directed to say following to-day's conference that as you have repeatedly refused to agree to any modification whatever of the terms of settlement passed at the massed meeting of the members of the A.W.U. on Saturday last, and have not taken any action to enforce the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act against the strikers, and have further expressed the determination of your Government to assist by all means in its power the enforcement of the union's resolve to stand for a 44-hour week, it is impossible for the members of the Chamber of Mines to continue negotiations, and have been instructed to advise you that—

- (a) Owing to the attitude of the Government in its support of the A.W.U. mining branch in the present dispute it has become impossible for the Chamber of Mines to adhere to the stand taken by it on the question of the 40-48 hour fortnight and to maintain its rights under the recent award.
- (b) The Chamber therefore is forced to accept the terms embodied in the resolution passed by the mass meeting of the A.W.U. held at Boulder on Saturday, the 9th inst.
- (c) The Chamber's decision is due to the Government having accepted full responsibility for its action in compelling the Chamber to take the course outlined in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this letter.

Subject to your acceptance of the foregoing, the members of the Chamber of Mines propose under protest to re-open the mines on the terms above mentioned and which you assure us have the Government's endorsement.

So we have the spectacle of the Premier, the Minister for Mines and the Minister for Lands going up to Kalgoorlie and, at the behest of the all-powerful Miners' Union, a union that elects goldfields members to Parliament and makes and unmakes Ministries—we find that the very men sworn to uphold the law of the land assisted the strikers to break it.

Mr. Sleeman: We would have had them gaoled under your Government.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Most law-breakers are gaoled. The only goldfields member of Parliament came to tell the miners the true position, had an unfortunate experience in a subsequent selection ballot held up there. We are told by the president of the Chamber of Mines that the result of the strike was a loss in wages of £200,000 and in gold production of £500,000. That is a tremendous loss for the State. In my opinion the action of the Government amounted to the greatest travesty of the arbitration laws ever perpetrated in Australia. It seems to me the Government are deserving of the greatest censure of Parliament and the people of the State for the attitude they took in that case. In an endeavour to repair in some degree the damage done to the State by the Government support of the strikers, the Government decided to send to the Old Country the Minister for Mines in order that he might in some way conciliate the British investors.

The Premier: Do not say that. We did not send him with that object.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: That was the main object of his visit.

The Premier: Oh no.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Yes, to endeavour to induce further British capital to be invested here.

The Premier: Be fair.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: British capital is proverbially shy, and the last thing required to frighten it away was this attitude of the Government in supporting the strikers on the goldfields.

The Premier: You do not know very much about recent history.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Yes, I know too much about it for the Premier. While the Premier and his colleagues were bowing the knee to the all-powerful A.W.U. on the goldfields there were a few sustenance workers in another portion of the State who were hurr-picking for a living. I want

to contrast the action of the Government in their treatment of the miners—who return most of the Ministers to Parliament—and their attitude towards those sustenance workers in the South-West. At the behest of the A.W.U. on the goldfields, the Government strained every nerve to bring about the defeat of a legitimate order of the Arbitration Court, whereas in respect of the sustenance workers the Minister for Works refused to see them, or to see their representatives to discuss their problems with them, until the men had returned to work. I am not blaming the Minister for Works, for this has been his attitude all along, and if the Minister is anything, he is consistent. All through the piece, whenever there has been a strike anywhere, he, like the President of the Arbitration Court, has insisted on the men returning to work before he would hear their case. If it was right for the Government to adopt that attitude towards the sustenance workers, why was it not right for them to take the same attitude towards the illegal strikers on the goldfields? The Government's action on the one hand, when dealing with a strong union, and their attitude towards a few helpless sustenance workers on the other, do not redound to the credit of the Government. Even the union which the sustenance workers formed for their own protection was debarred, was not palatable to Ministers and to Trades Hall, and so it was declared black, and the sustenance workers had to return to work. But the significant result of this ministerial intervention in the miners' strike is the present trouble amongst the foundry workers at Kalgoorlie. They, believing that the Government would go to their assistance as they had gone to the assistance of the miners, went on strike. The President of the Arbitration Court ordered a compulsory conference, but naturally that was abortive because the men were relying on Government influence to help them secure their demands. At the conclusion of the conference Mr. President Dwyer said that three questions, namely, payment of the industry allowance, away-from-home expenses and payment for shift work had been referred to the court for its decision. He emphasised, however, that the court would not proceed to make an award until work had been resumed. That is the position which should have ob-

tained in the trouble amongst the miners, whom the Government aided and abetted. After weeks of idleness, during which I presume the guilty conscience of the Government did not give them much rest, they invoked the aid of the Disputes Committee of the A.L.P. in the endeavour to settle the foundry strike. Evidently the Government were not able to do it themselves, and the Arbitration Court was unable to do it. So that they would not appear in the picture the Government induced the Disputes Committee of the A.L.P. to intervene. That committee visited Kalgoorlie and advised the men to return to work, and submit their case to the court. We are told that the committee emphasised the fact that the policy of the Government, as well as of the party, was that all disputes should be settled by arbitration. This showed a somewhat repentant attitude on the part of the Government, one that is only natural, and has been brought about by the fact that Parliament was shortly about to meet, and that the general elections were to be held next year. But why was this not brought into operation earlier, and why were not attempts made to put things right when the Government had the opportunity to do so? The spineless action of the Government on the occasion of these two strikes has earned for them the distrust of every self-respecting section of the community. It represents another nail in the political coffin of the Government.

The Premier: I will have something to say about the spineless actions of the Government of which you were a member, actions taken under similar circumstances. You won't get away with that story.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: During the last session of Parliament we passed a Dairy Products Marketing Organisation Bill. That was calculated to be of material benefit to those engaged in the butter fat section of the dairying industry, just as the Metropolitan Whole Milk Act has been of considerable benefit to whole milk producers. The Act provides for the appointment of a board to carry out its provisions. Section 8 provides that the board shall consist of six members appointed by the Government, and of the members so appointed two shall be nominated by the producers other than producers who are manufacturers. No manufacturer shall be a producer's representative or shall be concerned in the appointment of the pro-

ducers' representatives in any way. Parliament intended that those two members should be genuine representatives of producers. The Primary Producers' Association, which is the only recognised organisation of butter fat producers in the State—its membership comprises hundreds of butter fat producers—were entitled to nominate the producers' representative on the first board, pending arrangements for the election of the board. They were invited by the ex-Minister for Agriculture to nominate the producers' representative. The Minister also invited the executive of the South-West Conference to nominate the producers' representative. In my opinion he was quite wrong in that.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Whom did the Primary Producers recommend? Messrs. Pickering and Davies were never producers.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I care not whether the producers nominated lawyers, parsons, doctors or politicians. They were entitled to nominate their representatives. It does not matter whom they nominated. They could have nominated the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith). The P.P.A. is the only organised body of butter fat producers in the country. It has built up a large dairying section. Let us see of whom the South-West conference consists. It consists mainly of local governing bodies, road boards, vermin boards, agricultural societies, progress associations, race clubs and other similar bodies.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Every section of the primary producing community in the South-West.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Whether farming or not?

Mr. J. H. Smith: Yes.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Not only farming! The Act provides that only butter fat producers shall be entitled to nominate producers' representatives on the board. Many of the bodies constituting the South-West Conference may be made up of manufacturers or their representatives. The Act states that no manufacturer can be concerned in the election of the producers' representatives. Members of road boards, vermin boards, agricultural societies and so on are not necessarily producers. They may be storekeepers or other types of business men. There are many butter factories in the South-West, and the proprietors and managers of those establishments are prominent men in the community. They take an

active part in the public life of the district, and it is possible they may exercise considerable influence upon the conference. Such people are debarred from being producer's representatives on the board. That was Parliament's intention, and it should have been carried out by the Minister. Let us see who comprises the executive of the South-West Conference, which the Minister invited to nominate producers' representatives. One is Mr. S. J. Roberts, a storekeeper, another is Mr. G. E. Clark, a land agent and a brother of the manager of the largest co-operative factory in the State; and another is Mr. St. Barbe More, an Agricultural Bank inspector. There are some farmers upon the executive as well. That is the body which the ex-Minister for Agriculture invited to nominate the producers' representatives. As a fact, they nominated one of their own number, and the Minister appointed him. He turned down the nominee of the producers, and appointed at least one representative nominated by the South-West Conference executive, which consisted of one storekeeper, one land agent, one bank inspector, and some farmers. Is that a fair thing to the butter fat producers?

The Minister for Water Supplies: Whom did they nominate?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do not care if they nominated the Minister himself.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Could they not nominate storekeepers or land agents?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: There is nothing to prevent a land agent from acting on the board, but there is something to prevent land agents from nominating a primary producers' representative on the board. How does this action of the Minister square with that plank of the Labour Party's platform which provides for the maintenance and encouragement of all pools so that the primary industries may be able to market their products without interference from middlemen? The Minister goes to the middlemen and invites them to nominate producers' representatives to handle the producers' commodities. Is this plank of the Labour platform merely a hollow sham and a mockery? Is it intended only to tickle the ears of producers at election time, and then to be broken whenever the Government have the opportunity to do so?

The Minister for Water Supplies: The primary producers are well behind me. I made the closest inquiries. They did not want either Mr. Davies or Mr. Pickering.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They were not producers.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do not care anything about the personnel of the nominees. The Act provides that they shall be appointed in a certain way, as Parliament intended. The Minister went behind Parliament and appointed them in a manner contrary to the Act.

The Minister for Water Supplies: I said they should be producers.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Act does not say so.

The Minister for Water Supplies: You do not understand the Act.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do.

The Minister for Water Supplies: It says "producers."

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It does not.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Then read it out.

The Premier: That's it. Read it out.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Act says the members of the board shall be appointed by the Government, and that two shall be nominated by the producers, other than producers who are manufacturers within this State, whether incorporated or not.

The Minister for Justice: They must all be producers to be in it.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Not at all. Some were land agents and storekeepers.

The Minister for Justice: They could represent the producers.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If the Minister wanted to control the Wyndham Meat Works, would he go to the W.A. Turf Club and ask them to nominate members, merely because some pastoralists are members of that club? It is all farcical and a contravention of the Act.

The Minister for Justice: It does not say producers' organisers.

The Minister for Water Supplies: It does not say the representative shall be an architect. You are on a weak wicket. The South-West dairy producers are well behind us.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The action of the Minister has met with the disapproval of butter fat producers throughout the length and breadth of the South-West. Quite recently the nurses brought a case before the Arbitration Court and they asked a politician to appear for them. Why did they not ask a nurse to do so?

The Premier: There is no analogy. Politicians have been subject to the services of nurses during their lifetime.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I wish now to refer to the Agricultural Bank. During the recess the ex-member for South Fremantle, Mr. McCallum, transferred his activities from Parliament to the Agricultural Bank. He was a prominent member of this House for many years, and was one of the ablest debaters and shrewdest tacticians in the Chamber. He and his fellow commissioners have undertaken a pretty big job, and I am not sure that they are going to make a huge success of it. During recent years there has been a lot of criticism concerning the conduct of the bank under the control of Messrs. McLarty, Moran and Maley. If those gentlemen could not make a success of it, I doubt whether the present commissioners can do so. Mr. McLarty is essentially a practical man, with a lifetime experience of banking operations, and an intimate knowledge of the conditions appertaining to the agricultural areas. Messrs. Moran and Maley are both ex members of this House. They also have had a long business and farming experience, and know Western Australia probably as well as anyone does. If they were unable to achieve success such as was desired, I doubt whether the present commissioners, who have less experience and a less intimate knowledge of farming, are going to make the success of the job that we expect of them.

The Minister for Justice: Do not forget they have a different Act to work under.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Acts of Parliament do not count for much under these conditions. The first thing the commissioners did, that I know of, was to insert a notification in the Press that no member of Parliament would be allowed to interview the bank staff on behalf of their clients at any time in the future.

Mr. Wansbrough: Quite right, too.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: That was a distinct rebuff to country members.

The Premier: Rebuff!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It was unfair to clients of the bank and to country members. Most country members are members of the Country Party, though I do not suppose that influenced the commissioners. There are many farmers who are clients of the bank, but are unable to come to Perth, and place their cases before the officials. They desire that their representatives in Parliament should do this for them. Mem-

bers of Parliament can assist their electors and the clients of the bank very materially if allowed to do so, and they can also assist the institution itself.

The Premier: They can assist themselves to get votes.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Private members who interview the bank officials are not those people who have set up the political interference to which the Royal Commission in their report objected. The Royal Commission referred to Ministerial interference, such interference as would practically compel the bank officials to do something they felt should not be done, such as to open up a doubtful district because it was Government policy to do so. It was not the private members who exercised political influence. I do not think any private member could influence the commissioners against their better judgment in the interests of any particular client.

The Premier: Were they not trying to do so?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: No.

The Premier: You do not think so.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: No. Managers of the associated banks and other financial institutions have always welcomed members of Parliament, so that they might discuss their business relations with their clients if the clients wished them to do so. There has never been any objection on the part of those institutions. I have never met the manager of an associated bank who refused to discuss with me the affairs of his clients, provided the client asked me to do so. Then why should the Agricultural Bank Commissioners object?

The Premier: Is it a question of business relations, or one of political relations?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Purely and simply a question of business relations. The political aspect has never entered into the matter in the case of any member of Parliament that I know of interviewing the Agricultural Bank trustees. Other Government departments—the Department of Agriculture, the Railway Department, the Health Department, and in fact all the departments—like members of Parliament to come along and discuss the affairs of constituents: and, so far as I am aware, no harm has ever resulted. I have never sought to induce any particular department to do for a constituent of mine anything that I considered was unjustified; and I would proceed similarly

with regard to the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. I do not believe the Premier or any other member of Parliament would put forward unjustifiable requests either.

The Premier: Why should a member of Parliament come into the matter at all?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have mentioned that frequently it is not possible for the client himself to go into the matter personally. Clients have tried, unsuccessfully, to get satisfaction through correspondence.

The Premier: I know something about political interference with the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: To-day clients are unable to get satisfaction through writing to the Agricultural Bank. Their only hope is a personal interview, and from that aspect it is highly difficult to get into the office of the Commissioners. However, a client might get into the manager's office and obtain some satisfaction. On the other hand, a parliamentary representative going along to see the Bank authorities can get the thing done in half-an-hour, thus saving the farmer the expense of a visit to Perth or weeks of waiting for an answer to his letter. To-day the client cannot get satisfaction from either the head office or the branch. To-day we have over 2,000 Agricultural Bank properties vacant, and we do not want any more; but unless more satisfaction is obtainable by settlers, more of them will leave their properties. That will not be in the interests of Western Australia. I dare say the greatest problem confronting Australia is that of rural rehabilitation. Our rural industries have got into a desperate plight. They are now at a low ebb, as the result of five years of depressed commodity prices. The values of the commodities produced by our primary industries have in many cases been well below the cost of production. Particularly does this apply to those stable commodities, wheat and wool. In the interests of Australia as a whole, wheat and wool must be placed on a firmer basis. Last year the Commonwealth Government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the wheat and flour position. For that Commission the Federal Government were fortunate enough to secure what, in my opinion, are some of the best brains in Australia. Sir Herbert Gepp has done a vast deal of investigation work on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, and is one of our most able citizens. On the Commission was also Mr. Walter Harper, the chairman

of directors of the biggest co-operative concern in this State—a man who I venture to say knows more of what may be termed the business side of agriculture than any other man in Western Australia. The Federal Royal Commission have submitted their report—a remarkable document. I wish every member of Parliament would study it. The report makes out a strong case for national assistance towards the rehabilitation of rural industries. I shall quote some extracts from the report in order that they may sink deep into the minds of members of this House. I hope they will sink deep into the minds of the people of Australia generally. On page 32 of the report appears the following:—

The world wheat position makes it difficult for the Commission to take an optimistic view of the prospects of the industry during the next few years. The historical survey suggests that agricultural depressions normally extend over long periods, twenty years being by no means unusual.

"Twenty years being by no means unusual": those are prophetic words coming from the keen analytical minds on the Commission. In my opinion they convey a message of tremendous import to Australia. This is the fifth year of the depression, and our Agricultural Bank has over 2,000 vacant farms on its hands, and does not want any more. I venture the opinion that if we have another five years of depression similar to those we have gone through, the percentage of vacant farms will be even greater than it is to-day. The only means of saving the position is for the people of Australia to come to the rescue of those who are engaged in agricultural industry and put them on a firmer and more satisfactory basis than that on which they are to-day. The report states on page 35—

The Commission is forced to the view that, on the one hand, nationalism is too strong to permit European countries with high production costs to alter their policy to one of accepting cheap wheat, and, on the other hand, the present capacity for the production of wheat in exporting countries exceeds the probable demand to such an extent as to make it doubtful whether any return to the price level of 1926-28 will last for more than one or two seasons. In its first report the Commission recommended the adoption of the principle of a home consumption price for Australian wheat used for human consumption in Australia. The Commission has taken a price of 3s. per bushel f.o.r. Australian ports (including the assistance from the home

consumption price) as the basis of its calculation of the present stability of the wheat-growing industry. On this basis only about 40 per cent. of the Australian wheat farmers can continue in production, unless substantial reductions can be made in interest charges or other items of the cost of production. On page 132 of the report there is the following passage:—

The Commission has been unable to discover any prospect of a reduction in the costs of landing wheat in the "f.o.r. Australian ports" position through a reduction in the cost of bags. The bulk-handling system, if generally installed, will give the careful farmer a greater opportunity of avoiding the purchase of bags at high prices, because he will be in a position to mend damaged bags or use other transporting containers between the farm and the silo, if he cares to do so.

I now quote from page 133—

Having in view the necessities of farmers and recognising the desirability of adding as little as possible to the cost of living in Australia, the Commission is satisfied that the wheat farmers are entitled to share in the benefits accorded to other industries by the protection of the nation.

From page 247 of the report—

The Commission emphasises the serious financial position of the industry of growing wheat. It had been unprofitable since 1930, and Government assistance had been insufficient to remedy this position. The earnings from individual effort in the industry had been out of conformity with those of other industries.

I would like the Premier to mark that—"The earnings from individual effort in the industry had been out of conformity with those of other industries." I would like those hon. members who represent mainly secondary industries to take particular notice of that passage of the report. It flatly contradicts the Premier's statement that farmers do not work one bit harder than men working 44 hours a week in factories, and that the farmers get a jolly sight more for what they do. That is the Commission's comment on the statement made by the Premier some time ago.

The Minister for Lands: What do the Federal Commissioners know about it?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: They know about it because they have made special investigations to ascertain the position.

The Commission found that the Australian consumers had been receiving their wheat at a price approximately 1s. per bushel lower than the import parity price, and that the industry had definitely suffered in this regard. If that is the case, have the farmers been obtaining their machinery and other requisites on the farm at, say, 30 or 35 per cent.

below parity price? Certainly not. The tariff which protects Australia's secondary industries has absolutely prevented them from doing so.

The Commission recommended that the principle of a home consumption price for such part of the product as is consumed within the Commonwealth should be applied to the wheat industry.

The Premier: Is there any country in the world that has given greater assistance to its farmers than Western Australia has given?

Mr. Patrick: Yes.

The Premier: Tell me which country.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: We have a home consumption price for most of our secondary products, and that home consumption price represents the import value plus the highest tariff rates in the world. So that while other industries have been getting protection of that kind, the wheat-growing industry has not. I would like the Premier to listen to this passage from the Federal Commission's report—

The Commission has divided the wheat-growers into three groups.

Group 1, those who can pay their working expenses and meet their present interest charges when wheat is at 3s. per bushel f.o.r. ports (including Commonwealth assistance).

Group 2, those who can pay their working expenses and meet some of their interest charges.

Group 3, those who are unable to produce wheat at 3s. per bushel f.o.r. ports, even if they are free from all interest.

Mr. Sleeman: Does the report say anything about farmers who can pay and will not?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The report continues—

The Commission finds that Group 1 contains 40 per cent. of the growers, Group 2 contains 26 per cent., and Group 3, 34 per cent.

There is the position; only 40 per cent. of the farmers can pay their way under present conditions, and 34 per cent. cannot pay their way at all with wheat at 3s. per bushel. If 34 per cent. of the growers cannot make a living under those conditions, is it not up to the State to alter the conditions so that those men can make a living?

The Premier: What do you propose?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am proposing in a general way that the people of Australia should come to the assistance of Australian wheatgrowers and make their existence as wheatgrowers and farmers

possible and practicable.

The Premier: A very nice general statement!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The report says on page 249—

The gap between cost of production and current prices of rural products is the measure of rural distress which has to be faced. Devices for alleviating the burden of depressed prices upon primary producers have been adopted in almost all countries. There is a definite need for reconstruction of the Australian industry as it now exists, surrounded with the accumulated troubles of the last four years. The broad lines of the future wheat policy of the Commonwealth should embrace the following:—(a) The maximum possible contribution by Australia to the solution of the problem of the revival of international trade, especially the maintenance of active trade relations with all countries which are prospective purchasers of wheat and flour. (b) A general review of all items in the cost of production, including debts and interest, with a view to ascertaining the extent of relief which the industry may expect from such sources.

The Premier: Will you impress all these things on Dr. Page?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: We have done so.

The Minister for Lands: Representatives of the Federal Country Party form part of the Federal Government.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Recently the Chairman of the Royal Commission paid a visit to Western Australia, and, in the course of an interview, Sir Herbert Gepp made the following statement—

During this tour, more than ever before, I have become convinced that farming is more than a business; it is a way of life. It is the hereditary land instinct in our farmers that prevents them calculating the man per hour cost of much of their labour. In my opinion, if it were not for the attitude of mind that remark implies, we would have encountered a much greater resentment against conditions as they operate at present in the wheat country.

And that is a positive fact. If we had not the attitude of mind that the remark of Sir Herbert Gepp implies, our farmers would undoubtedly resent conditions under which they are unfortunately producing, far more than they resent it to-day. It is that hereditary land instinct in a farmer that persuades him, almost against his will, to continue with his holding even though he may make a loss from his production. I know that from my own experience, and that of my neighbours. I have been conducting a farm that was developed at

a time when the work could be done more cheaply than is possible to-day. Despite that fact, I cannot make it a profitable concern. In those circumstances, how can it be expected that my neighbour, who has had to develop his holding under much more costly conditions, can ever hope to pay his interest bill? For him it is a physical impossibility.

The Premier: Give us the remedy.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The members of the Royal Commission made a careful and exhaustive investigation of the whole position. They have submitted to the Commonwealth Government their considered report, and I hope the Commonwealth Government, State Governments, and the people of Australia generally, will profit as a result of the investigation. A moment ago the Premier interjected that I should tell members what other countries have been doing for their farmers. In the United States of America where the authorities appreciate the necessity to assist their producers, the Farm Credit Administration have arranged loans for 700,000 farmers, who constitute about 25 per cent. of the farmers who have mortgages on their properties, representing an annual saving in interest of £6,000,000. Let us come nearer home and see what South Australia has done. South Australia is the first State in the Commonwealth to recover her financial position since the depression commenced.

The Premier: How did South Australia do that?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: South Australia has shown a credit balance in her finances.

The Premier: Recovered! Rubbish!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: To a very large extent, the reason for South Australia's recovery has been due to the care extended to those who are engaged in the agricultural industry. The authorities realised the necessity for keeping up production. They knew that the railways, the harbours and every other State facility benefited by increased production, and they had seen to it that production, even in spite of disastrous seasons, had been well maintained.

The Premier: And the South Australians are the highest taxed people in Australia.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Through adopting that policy, South Australia has achieved that position and has turned the corner.

The Premier: Turned the corner he

damned! You do not know what you are talking about.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do.

The Premier: They are the highest taxed people in the Commonwealth, and South Australia to-day is the most poverty stricken of the States.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Premier: Turned the corner!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Although seasons generally were not as good in that State as in Western Australia, the South Australian Government have seen the necessity for providing upwards of £500,000 per annum for the assistance of necessitous farmers.

The Minister for Lands: We give them all that in.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I thought the Minister was going to contradict my statement.

The Minister for Lands: That amount was distributed.

The Premier: You should go to South Australia.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The South Australian Government made funds available for the purchase of seasonal commodities that the farmers were unable to provide for themselves.

The Premier: South Australia recovered! Humph!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: During recent years, the South Australian Government have made available from £400,000 to £700,000 per annum by way of assistance to necessitous farmers in that State.

The Premier: Surely you should know something about South Australia.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Premier cannot contradict my statements, which are facts. The truth is that in South Australia there exists an agricultural conscience, which is shared by the Government there, but unfortunately is not shared by the Government of Western Australia.

The Premier: I have never heard such a thing before!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: There must come a time, and it may be soon, when the people of Australia and particularly the creditors of the farmers, will realise that they must come to the assistance of the farmers and lighten, in some measure, the impossible load of debt that the men on the land have incurred during recent years. Merchants, bankers and the general community have assisted the farmers to incur

that impossible liability. That fact has been admitted by the Royal Commission on the Wheat and Flour Industry, who estimated that the liability amongst the wheatgrowers alone amounted to £151,000,000. The various sections I have referred to were particularly anxious to assist the farmers to incur that liability, and to-day they must come to the assistance of the farmers to enable them to stand up to their obligation. In my opinion it is the only policy that Australia can pursue. If she is to carry out her natural national destiny as a wheat and primary producing country, it is the only policy Australia can adopt. It seems to me that the rationing of production to any appreciable extent would be futile. It would amount to a policy of despair that would get us nowhere. We must make primary production profitable, and it is only the people of Australia who can make it so. The markets of the world will probably buy our commodities, but may not pay as much as is necessary to enable our producers to continue at a profit.

The Minister for Justice: They are not prepared to buy at all.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Minister for Justice recently returned from a visit to Japan, and as he is an observant man, I would ask him if he does not consider that that country, which has a natural increase in population of about 1,000,000 per annum, would not be prepared to take a greater percentage of our primary products than it is doing to-day, particularly if the matter were placed fairly and squarely before the people there.

The Minister for Lands: Did not Mr. Latham go to Japan and later on did not the Federal Government send a mission there?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: One mission will not do the job; the work must be done all the time and continuously. The fact remains that since Mr. Latham visited Japan, our own Minister for Justice went there. While Mr. Willecock did not go as a trade commissioner, I feel certain that he did not remain silent while he was in that country. No public man from Australia would remain silent while he was in Japan or any other foreign country. It is necessary for the rehabilitation of our industry that we should have expanding markets. Japan is one of our natural markets, and surely something could be done in the direc-

tion of expanding our exports to that country. Naturally I realise that if we were to attempt that, we would have to offer them increased trade in other directions.

Mr. Wilson: We would have to import their goods.

Mr. Moloney: Some of their cheap stuff.

Mr. Cross: We would have to buy Japanese toys.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Another of the very pressing problems confronting Western Australia is vermin destruction, particularly with reference to rabbits.

The Minister for Lands: What, back to rabbits!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If the Minister were to get back to rabbits, he would get back home. The destruction that is being caused to the crops and pastures by the rabbit pest is enormous. It has to be seen to be appreciated, and I wish that members of Parliament, particularly those representing city and suburban constituencies, could visit the country areas and see for themselves some of the devastation that is being caused by the pest. It has reached such a stage to-day that, in my opinion, the problem should be regarded as one of national importance. I wish the Federal Government would so regard it. The task is certainly beyond the power or capacity of individual farmers or pastoralists to cope with. The policy that has been adopted down the ages has been to leave vermin destruction to the individual land holder, but that must now be altered. There must be a recognition of the State's responsibility as well as that of the Commonwealth. Crown lands, roads, reserves and abandoned Agricultural Bank farms represent from 20 to 25 per cent. of the land in the south-western land division of the State. When I make that statement, members will realise how reasonable it is that the State should undertake some responsibility in connection with rabbit destruction, for it should not be left to the individual farmer whose land adjoins these vacant areas. The policy was quite all right in days gone by, but it must be altered to meet present-day conditions. It is absolutely wrong that millions of rabbits that infest these vacant or abandoned areas should be allowed to remain such a tremendous menace to adjoining land owners, making it impossible for them to cope with the problem on their holdings. In my opinion, the first essential is the provision of wire netting, which should be cheap and plentiful. Wire netting should be the

farmers' first line of defence against the pest, and I would like the Commonwealth Government to supply that netting free of interest charges. If we could persuade the Federal authorities to do so, then it would be a fair thing to ask the land owners to provide a sinking fund of three or four per cent., which would enable them to pay for the netting in 25 years. In addition to that, if it is not possible to induce the Commonwealth Government to provide the netting, the State should provide 50 per cent. of the wire netting on the boundaries of properties adjoining Crown lands, including the abandoned Agricultural Bank farms. Farmers should be given encouragement to use the wire netting, because every rabbit-proof fence that is erected constitutes a further step towards the control of the pest and its ultimate extermination. I do not want it to be thought that the mere erection of a rabbit-proof fence would complete the task of the farmer, because there are many other steps to be taken. The Vermin Act must be amended to ensure that no land owner shall be a menace to his neighbour, and also to enable local vermin boards to supply poison and fumigants free of charge, which is not possible under the provisions of the present Act. I am certain there are ways of dealing effectively with the rabbit pest. I would mention what has been achieved at the Cranmore Park Estate, which is owned by the Boolardy Pastoral Company, in the Moora district. The estate comprises 10,000 acres. Two or three years ago the area was literally over-run with rabbits; to-day a rabbit cannot be found on the estate. The extermination of the pest has been a costly process, and the manager of the estate, Mr. Lefroy, told me that it cost 1s. 6d. per acre, apart from the cost of the netting. The whole of the estate was fenced with rabbit-proof netting, and the area was subdivided. The method adopted then was to dig up every warren on the property. There is not a rabbit warren on the property that has not been dug down to the very bottom. That work was followed up by the daily patrolling of the paddocks by men with packs of dogs, numbering as many as 25. Should a stray rabbit have escaped when the warrens were dug up, the dogs got it, and by that means the rabbits were exterminated, and the property to-day is absolutely free. Mr. Lefroy informed me that from one paddock of 1,000 acres, the

men who dug out the warrens killed 12,000 rabbits. In another paddock of 14 acres, which he regarded as impossible to dig out because it was so rocky, he estimated that there were 25,000 rabbits. Mr. Lefroy fenced off that 14 acres of rocky land, let the rabbits eat it out, and then when they were starving he gave them as much poisoned wheat and poisoned water as the vermin could consume. By that means Mr. Lefroy was able to clear out every rabbit from that difficult section. That is the only way by which the pest can be eradicated. We must fence, poison, destroy cover, harass, plough warrens, dig out, dig in, and wage constant warfare. It is the only way to deal with the pest. Otherwise the pest will beat us.

The Premier: Of course that could not be done by men without money.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I mentioned that Mr. Lefroy had stated his cost, outside of netting, at 1s. 6d. an acre.

The Premier: That is no good to the average man.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is good to the average man, and he has to be prepared to do it because, if he does not, the rabbits will be at him. It is the man under the average who cannot do it. The average man can do it probably more cheaply than could Mr. Lefroy, because he had to pay for labour. If a man can provide the rabbit netting, he can do the rest himself. I think that the local vermin boards should assist him to do the rest by providing him with poison and fumigants, either free of charge or at a low cost. Vermin boards would like to assist in that way, but the Act does not permit them to do so.

The Minister for Lands: That would not provide the wire netting.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Vermin Act could be amended to enable the local vermin boards to supply landowners with poison and fumigants. It would be only a small matter for the State or for the board. I should like to see the State assist the boards in providing poison and fumigants.

The Minister for Lands: That would not buy wire netting.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Of course not, but wire netting should be found somehow or other. If the Commonwealth will not provide it, the State should.

The Minister for Lands: You did not do it when you were in office.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The conditions then were entirely different. To-day the rabbit menace is 500 times worse than it was three years ago. In my part of the country there were hardly any rabbits three years ago, but to-day it is infested with them. First of all, farmers must fence; then they must fumigate and poison, dig out the burrows and harass bunny all the time. Constant warfare is necessary to get rid of the menace. That is the only way to do it, and if we do not face it the rabbit will win, and we will lose.

The Premier: You know that the rabbit menace has been serious and great for long years. It is not a matter of recent occurrence.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: In most of our districts the menace has not been serious until the last three or four years. In the last two years it has increased 200 per cent. Where there was not a sign of a rabbit two years ago, rabbits are to be found to-day. The wet summer the year before last was responsible for the tremendous increase in their numbers. The breeding season was extended from the summer into the winter, and that was responsible for the tremendous increase in the pest. The whole thing represents a shocking waste of wealth, and the wealth at stake is not only that of the farmer; it is the wealth of the creditors and the wealth of the State, and something must be done to get the State, and if possible the Commonwealth, to assist in eliminating that enormous waste.

The Premier: That is true; something must be done, but tell us what should be done.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I regret extremely the statement made by Dr. Earle Page in Perth that the Commonwealth Government were not prepared to provide the netting, but I suggest that the State Government and the people of this State who are mainly interested should keep hammering at the Commonwealth until they are convinced that their decision was a mistake. Sometimes Governments alter their minds. If we continue long enough to represent the position to the Federal Government, they might alter their minds.

The Premier: A very general statement.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: When the Minister for Lands stated that the Commonwealth offer of 1 per cent. reduction in

the rate of interest on money for the purchase of netting was no good to us, it was very disappointing to the farmers. I want to know why the Minister should say that money at 1 per cent. reduction is no good to the State. If it is good to the Government of other States, why not to the Government of this State? In New South Wales the Government have bought £236,000 worth of wire netting for settlers.

The Minister for Lands: Humbug!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is unfair of the Minister to interject that my statement is humbug when I know it is correct. The Government of New South Wales have advanced £236,000 to their farmers for the purchase of rabbit netting and have used money that they obtained from the Commonwealth on the basis of 1 per cent. reduction. If it is good for New South Wales, why not for Western Australia? New South Wales is prepared to utilise some of its loan allocation for rabbit extermination. Why should not Western Australia be prepared to utilise some of its loan funds? It is because there are some Country Party members in the Government of New South Wales and because the Government of that State have an agricultural conscience, which the Western Australian Government do not possess. The Government in this State provide that every application for rabbit netting shall be accompanied by a deposit of £1 per mile. I have never been quite able to understand why it should be £1 per mile instead of £1 per application. That money is not applied towards the payment for the netting; it is used for administrative expenses. If the application is refused, the applicant is charged 10s. 6d. for the refusal and for returning the balance.

The Minister for Lands: Just as your Government did.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I did not know that that was the state of affairs when the Mitchell Government were in office. I was not the Minister charged with the responsibility of distributing rabbit netting. If I had known that such a charge was being made, I would have exerted efforts to get the charge abolished. No farmer who paid it mentioned the matter to me. However, such a charge is being made to-day. The officer in control says the charge is being made and the Minister does not deny it. The Government should be able to bear

the cost, instead of charging an applicant £1 for it.

The Premier: In other words, you want us to do something which your Government did not do.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I understand that the Government have recently made a demand on the Associated Banks to guarantee the interest and sinking fund payment on the money provided for the purchase of netting for Associated Bank clients. It has been the practice in the past for the Associated Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions to waive their rights as first mortgagees, insofar as the cost of wire netting is concerned, and to allow the Government to take a first mortgage. Now the Government say that is no good to them: they insist on the institutions guaranteeing the payment of interest and sinking fund. It seems to me that is an unfair attitude. I do not wish to do anything that would deprive the Government of obtaining interest on the netting, but surely it would be possible to make an equitable arrangement between the Government as first mortgagee, the bank as second mortgagee and the farmer client, by which each could get some payment from the farmer's annual return proportionate to the amount to which each was entitled. I do not wish to see the farmer deprived of the necessities of life, but an arrangement could be made by which the Government and the bank could obtain some payment towards the interest due to them. I should like to ask the Minister for Lands, who is interested in this matter, to give careful consideration to the point I have raised, and see if such an arrangement cannot be made. If it is not done, the use of wire netting will be restricted, and none of us wants to see that. I wish to see every farm enclosed with rabbit-proof netting in the near future. This cannot be brought about unless all parties co-operate, and we must have co-operation by the Government with the farmer. Apart from the rabbits, we have another pest that is doing a considerable amount of harm and that is the fox. The losses of lambs are considerable. There are isolated individuals who claim that the fox does a certain amount of good. I am prepared to believe that it did a certain amount of good when rabbits were not very numerous. The fox caught a lot of young rabbits and destroyed them, but to-day rabbits are so numerous that the

foxes cannot possibly make any impression upon them. I believe that if the value of the lambs destroyed by foxes were devoted to rabbit extermination, it would be responsible for a thousand times more destruction than the foxes are doing. There is a bonus for foxes of 5s. per scalp and 1s. for cubs, and it is the bonus of 1s. that I am attacking. The amount is too low; it should be increased. Professional trappers who are responsible for destroying most foxes are not going to bring in cubs at 1s. per head. They let them go, believing that they will get them when they have grown up.

The Minister for Lands: You know that more cannot be paid.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have an idea that more cannot be paid because the central vermin fund has not sufficient money.

The Minister for Lands: You reduced the rate when you were in office.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: My object in reducing the rate was to enable the farmers to pay the little that was left. They could not pay the whole amount then, and it was a common-sense course to reduce the rate. Was not everything reduced at that time? It was only fair and equitable that the vermin rate should be reduced. I warn the Minister that if he increases the rate, the farmer will not be able to pay it. To show how absurd it is to offer 1s. for cubs, I will quote the experience of a board in my electorate, which goes to show that the professional trappers will not bring in cubs at 1s. per head. For the year ended June, 1934, the board paid for 1,041 fox scalps and 40 cubs. For the year ended June, 1935, the board paid for 1,179 fox scalps and 40 cubs. The 40 cubs were trapped largely by land-owners. They are not brought in by professional trappers, and will not be brought in by them at that price. If the central vermin fund is so depleted that the bonus cannot be increased, the Government should supplement the fund to enable the board to bring the bonus up to 2s. 6d., if not 5s.

The Premier: There are lots of things that you want done that your Government did not do.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: A question that is exercising the minds of wheatgrowers is that of bulk handling. The wheatgrowers throughout the State resent the Government's policy of procrastination by appointing a Royal Commission to investigate the question.

The Premier: Was that procrastination?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Absolute procrastination in the interests of a few lumpers at Fremantle, jeopardising the interests of about 10,000 wheatgrowers.

The Minister for Justice: Mr. Monger said the appointment of the Commission was a good thing.

The Premier: Mr. Monger said he was glad the Commission had been appointed because it had given time for consideration. You need to be careful what you say against Mr. Monger, you know.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It was impossible for the Commission to obtain any more information than was already available on the question of bulk handling. Officials in the Public Works Department and in the Department of Agriculture know as much about the bulk handling installation in New South Wales as do most people in New South Wales. It was absurd for the Commission to go to New South Wales, because they could obtain little or no additional information. More information on bulk handling is available in Western Australia than in any other country of the world.

The Premier: Can you explain how it was that in the last Parliament your Government did not get through a Bill for bulk handling?

Mr. Patrick: Only one man on your side supported it.

The Premier: Never mind that one man. Explain how it was you did not get the Bill through. You had a majority, and did not get the Bill through.

Mr. Seward: You were not game to go on with it.

The Premier: Explain why it was that you did not get it through, even with your majority.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am glad the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Fox) is in the House, because I want to refer to some evidence he gave before the Royal Commission on Bulk Handling, and I want to be perfectly fair to the hon. member, not to misrepresent him in any way. According to the newspaper report of the statement he made, he said that the quantity of bulk wheat shipped from Fremantle this season was 284,294 tons, and that the bulk system had resulted in the displacement of 78 men with a consequent loss to the lumpers of £16,181 in wages. I am prepared to bring hundreds of farmers willing to say that they saved 3d. per bushel on the handling of their

wheat in bulk as against bags. On this tonnage given by Mr. Fox the gain to the farmers as the result of the transfer from bag to bulk handling would be £131,486. And it must be remembered that a great deal of that would have gone to Calcutta for bags. The hon. member for South Fremantle also stated that if the total tonnage for the whole season, namely, 454,943 tons, had been shipped in bulk the loss to lumpers in wages would have been £25,991. They are the hon. member's own figures, and I have no desire to dispute them. But on that tonnage the saving to the farmers, at the rate of 3d. per bushel, would have been £210,411, a sum sufficient to provide full time employment for approximately 1,140 men at the basic wage. According to the hon. member, 130 men would have lost their jobs at Fremantle if all the wheat sent away during the season had been handled in bulk. On the other hand, as I say, the farmers would have saved enough out of it to employ 1,140 men at the basic wage. The lumpers would have lost in wages £25,991, but the saving to the farmers would have been £210,411. And when we get back to what has been regarded as a normal state of affairs, when we might expect to handle a 40,000,000 bushel harvest, the saving to the farmers would amount to £500,000. Surely any Government having the farmers' interests at heart would be anxious that the farmers should benefit to the amount of that saving. The Government would have conferred a benefit on Western Australia if they had made it possible for the farmers to effect that saving last year; and they could have done it had they agreed to the wishes of the farmers and allowed Co-operative Bulk Handling to extend the system.

The Premier: Why did not your Government do it three years ago?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I regret that some Government departments are not sympathetic to bulk handling. In my opinion the Railway Department should never have been allowed to impose that extra freight of 9d. per ton on bulk wheat. Of course the railways put up a case to justify that imposition in the interests of their own finances. But that does not make it just. Nowhere else, not in New South Wales, in Canada, in South African or in the Argentine do the railways attempt to justify such a thing; on the other hand, they do everything they can

to facilitate the handling of grain in bulk. In South Africa the railways actually carry free of cost the farmers' bags back to those sidings where there are no bulk handling facilities. Everywhere outside of Western Australia the railways desire to extend bulk handling.

The Premier: The one man on your side who fought for bulk handling was the man who lost his seat at the last election.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The wheat-growers are extremely gratified at the report submitted by the Royal Commission, and they want to urge on the Government that there shall now be no delay in the extension of bulk handling facilities. I hope the Government will not wait until the elections are any closer before they get a move on in this regard. I hope they will not delay any longer. I do not agree with the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick) that it is too late to do anything this year, for I hold that a few more sidings might well be equipped with the necessary facilities so that the farmers of the several districts might save 3d. per bushel on their wheat.

The Premier: We will do something which your Government did not do during their three years of office, and that perhaps before the year is out.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Two years ago the Commonwealth Government appointed a committee to investigate the wool industry. That committee made certain recommendations in the interests of wool growers, particularly regarding marketing facilities. This is what the committee said in its report.

The present position is one not only of low prices, but also of instability, and special action may be required to avoid, if possible, any relapse in prices. The committee therefore considers that special machinery for speedy action should be established. It is therefore recommended—

- (a) That a Commonwealth wool executive be constituted by the Woolgrowers' Council after a new election of its personnel, comprising one woolgrowers' representative from each State and its chairman, and two representatives of the National Council of the wool-selling brokers with five to form a quorum for quick action; and
- (b) That the Commonwealth Government by regulation or otherwise should take to itself power to prohibit the export of wool except on such conditions as may be prescribed, provided that such power should not be exercised except upon the request of the Commonwealth Wool Executive.

Certain growers in this State and in other States, and some organisations whose interests are not always identical with producers' interests, have objected to the recommendations, and recently the Primary Producers' Association, which is the only organisation in Western Australia of the small woolgrowers, asked the Government through the ex Minister for Agriculture to take a plebiscite of the woolgrowers throughout the State to ascertain their views on certain of the committee's recommendations. That was a fair request and the cost of taking the referendum would have been small. Yet the Minister declined to do it, notwithstanding that it affected 10,000 woolgrowers. Thinking a better fate might await them with the new Minister for Agriculture, they went to him, but he also turned them down. Unfortunately some large woolgrowers are opposing the proposals, and the Minister in the very breath in which he declined the request said that 58 growers in his electorate had produced 50,000 bales of wool. Of course the Minister opposed it.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not the function of the Government.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is not the function of the Government to assist the miners in breaking the law. I want to make a comparison of the attitude of the Government in refusing this plebiscite to the woolgrowers and their encouragement of the plebiscite demanded by the miners to determine whether they would obey a legitimate order of the Arbitration Court. The Premier, in answer to a question I asked to-day, said the cost of that plebiscite or ballot was £389,000.

The Premier: Nonsense! It was £389.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Well, that is the first mistake I have made to-night. The Premier said the cost of taking the ballot was £389. The Government did not stop to consider the cost in that instance. They equipped the Chief Electoral Officer with a motor car and a driver, drums of petrol, shovels, tents, picks, ropes and all the necessary gear and sent him all over the mining areas of the State, including Kalgoorlie and Wiluna, and the cost was £389. Why would not the Government agree to the plebiscite of the woolgrowers to ascertain their attitude towards important recommendations of the Commonwealth Wool Investigation Committee? The cost of the miners' plebiscite was borne by the Government, whereas the

woolgrowers would have to pay for their own.

The Minister for Lands: But they do not want it. Many of them are against it.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: We have hundreds of woolgrowers in our ranks, but because a few big pastoralists do not want it, the Minister for Lands believes that none of the woolgrowers want it. Why does not the Minister refuse assistance to small dried-fruit growers? Because 58 of the Minister's woolgrowers produced 50,000 bales of wool, he will not assist the small men in the taking of this proposed plebiscite.

The Minister for Water Supplies: The plebiscite would not alter the recommendation.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: You do not wish to take it in order to see the result. The operations of the Transport Board have had somewhat the same effect on many farmers as fleas have on dogs—it is the most irritating institution we have ever had in Western Australia. We passed an Act providing that the board should make investigations into transport matters, and in the making of those investigations the board was instructed to take into consideration certain factors, including the question of transport generally and the giving of impartial and equitable treatment to all conflicting interests. Unfortunately the Transport Board have been obsessed with the railway viewpoint. In my opinion they have not taken into consideration the impartial and equitable treatment of all conflicting interests; not only in the Great Southern areas, where there are many small woolgrowers who can get their wool to Fremantle and their goods back again much cheaper by road than by rail, but in other parts of the State such interests have not been taken into consideration. In my own electorate there are two conflicting interests, one a privately owned railway and the other a privately owned road transport. When the Transport Board eliminated the road competition with the State railways the Commissioner of Railways immediately reduced his freights by some £50,000 per annum. Simultaneously the Transport Board cut out the road competition with the privately owned Midland Railway, but the Midland Railway Company did not reduce freights by so much as a farthing. If the Transport Board had taken an impartial and equitable view of all conflicting interests,

surely they would have given some consideration to the road haulers in those Midland areas. To-day they have all been wiped out and the Midland Railway Company have all the traffic and have not reduced their freights.

Mr. Tonkin: Private enterprise.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Both represent private enterprise, and the Act lays it down that equitable treatment shall be given to them. They have not done so. They have given favourable treatment to the Railways and inequitable treatment to the truck owner. There are many farmers miles away from a railway who have been sending their fruit, cream, butter and eggs to market by road. They are as far from the Midland Railway as from any State-owned railway. They do not use either to any great extent, particularly with regard to small side-lines, and yet they have been forced out of the production of those things because the Transport Board has cut out their road communication. It is altogether an inequitable proposition, and a matter in which the Minister for Railways should take an interest and point out to the Transport Board. I now wish to have something to say about Secession.

Mr. Wilson: We do not want that.

The Premier: Are you out to beat Mr. Thomson's record?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I regret that the petition of the people of Western Australia to the Imperial Parliament for severance from the rest of the Commonwealth has been turned down by a Committee of the House of Commons. That Committee prevented the undoubtedly strong case of this State for secession from being considered on its merits. It has never been considered by the House of Commons, and its merits have not been given a moment's thought. This will be a matter for great disappointment to thousands of loyal Western Australians who whole-heartedly believe in Secession.

The Premier: Why not move a motion of censure on the House of Commons?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It will also be a disappointment to many Western Australians who, whilst they would not support Secession itself, would certainly do anything they could to get more favourable treatment from the Commonwealth. Western Australia has blazed the track for more equitable treatment of the smaller States

at the hands of the Commonwealth. I believe the suggestion of the Premier that we might now expect the co-operation of South Australia and Tasmania has something to commend it. Whilst I approve of that, I hope the people of the State will not give up their intense desire to secure Secession from the rest of the Commonwealth until they have explored every avenue. There may be other ways by which we can achieve what we desire. I have had firmly fixed in my mind that the only way to achieve a reasonably big destiny as a producing country is for Western Australia to paddle its own canoe. It will not be brought about whilst we are tied to the chariot wheels of the Eastern States:

The Premier: How is it going to be done?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Because the Committee of the House of Commons has decided that our petition was not proper to be received, it does not follow that the people of Great Britain have not been informed of the exact state of affairs. I venture to say that the delegation appointed by this Parliament has seen to that. I should like to draw the attention of the House to a short article which appeared recently in "The London Economist," as follows:—

If, as seems probable, the Commonwealth remains firmly opposed to secession, we may hope that Western Australia's very genuine economic grievances will receive further consideration. The Commonwealth's excessive protectionism has injured West Australian farmers by contracting their export markets and raising the price of their purchases of manufactures. As long as this inequitable situation lasts Western Australia has a moral if not a constitutional claim to urge on the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth will be well advised to meet it, and so remove the need for secession talk.

I am not enamoured of the idea that the Commonwealth Government will treat us more favourably than they are doing at present. I doubt whether our wealth producers can expect very much better treatment from them. The Commonwealth Government are situated two or three thousand miles away, and are not likely to treat us better unless our own Government, situated in our midst, are going to treat the wealth producers of the State more sympathetically than they have done in the past. My principal complaint against the Government is that they will persist in spending the bulk of the State's money in and around the metropolitan area, mainly for the benefit of their political supporters, men who by political action are forced, in many instances against

their will, to contribute to the funds of unions who are supporting Labour Parliamentarians. The Government spend large sums of money in metropolitan sewerage and drainage, foreshore beautification, and metropolitan roads. They insist that everyone who is employed at the country's expense shall contribute his quota to funds that are largely used to secure their own and their supporters' return to Parliament. The result of all this is that Trades Hall was never better off than it is to-day. It is no wonder it can put up an £8,000 addition to the building in Beaufort-street. Hundreds of additional workers have had their subscriptions forced into the coffers of Trades Hall, very often against the will of the men who have paid such amounts, and but little expenditure has been incurred in the interests of the agricultural community.

The Premier: You are a wonderful help to Nationalist metropolitan members.

Mr. Moloney: Would you stop all metropolitan works?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Notwithstanding the many promises of the Government to relieve distressed farmers, we still find that the activities of the Government are mainly confined to the mining areas or to the metropolitan area.

The Premier: That is distinctly unfair.

The Minister for Justice: And it is untrue.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Government are spending hundreds of thousands of pounds on foreshore reclamation, Stirling Highway, and other works.

The Minister for Justice: Where have hundreds of thousands of pounds been spent on foreshore reclamation?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Foreshore reclamations are costing about £1,000 a month.

The Minister for Justice: But you said they were costing hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Who would pay for all this if there was no producing community left? All this expenditure will be of no value unless we have wealth producers to pay interest and sinking fund upon it. Unless the Government are prepared to give more sympathetic consideration to the interests and welfare of the wealth producers of the State, we shall not be able to pay for all this beautification scheme within the metropolitan area.

The Premier: Ask the farmers who have been their best friends. Ask Boyle.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The answer to that is, members who are sitting on these benches.

The Premier: I will quote what he said about your party.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Recently, at the invitation of the Government I had the privilege of participating in a trip to the North-West.

Mr. Lambert: A periscopic expedition out of a porthole.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The trip was efficiently organised by the Minister for the North-West. It afforded us an opportunity to meet local residents and get into touch with their leaders, the chairmen and members of local governing bodies, not only along the coast but for many miles inland. We met members of local governing bodies who came, I think, from nearly 200 miles inland. We heard their point of view as well as that of the members of local governing bodies along the coast. As a result of that trip, I have suggested to many of my friends that if they want an interesting journey they should go at all events as far as Carnarvon, and see what has been done there in the way of tropical agriculture. It is wonderful to see the banana and pineapple plantations there. I have heard a lot of discussion as to who should have the credit for this development. From a close investigation extending over several years I have come to the conclusion that the ex-member for Gascoyne (Hon. E. H. Angelo) is entitled to a lot of the credit. He tried his utmost to establish tropical agriculture at Carnarvon, and spent not only his time but his own money in doing so.

The Minister for Lands: Why did he not succeed?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: He was unable to succeed because he did not possess the necessary scientific and practical knowledge to ensure the success of his undertaking. The men and women engaged in the industry are entitled to most of the credit.

The Premier: How much money did he put into it?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The progress that has been made with tropical agriculture in that part of the State is a standing monument to the present Minister for Agriculture. Although I would give a meed of praise to the ex-member for Gascoyne, who did his best, I acknowledge that the present Minister for Agriculture has done wonder-

ful work in this connection. The district is under an everlasting debt of gratitude to him for what he has done. We also got an insight into the fishing industry at Shark Bay. We were told that most of the products of that industry are sold in Melbourne. At present we are consuming fish imported from Scotland, New Zealand and Japan. We had ample opportunity to sample the products of the factory at Shark Bay. They were as good as anything it is possible to get from any other country. The fish was of tip-top quality and quite as good as that which comes from Scotland. Surely we ought to do what we can to give publicity to this fact, and endorse the action of the present Minister for Industrial Development, who is doing his utmost to ensure the local consumption of these commodities to a larger extent.

Mr. Lambert: After you had eaten bananas and fish, what else did you indulge in?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: We saw something of the cattle industry of the hinterland behind Derby.

The Premier: Do not go into details.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is unfortunate that the people of the Kimberleys are not able, because of lack of capital, to go in for the cattle industry on lines that would appear to the outsider to be desirable. Along the natural water frontages we saw that the country had been eaten out, whereas a few miles away from water there was an abundance of feed. If the beef industry is going to assume large dimensions in this country, and the Kimberleys are the place where it will have to be encouraged, something will have to be done to provide finance for the pastoralists to enable them to utilise the idle country that is available, and to secure better sales for their products, so that they may build up the quality of their herds, without which they cannot compete with other countries. It has been suggested that we were only periscopic port-hole politicians on that particular tour. That is not so. We had one trip of 150 miles from one port to another. We saw the famous Roe-hourne Plains, from which the whole of the North-West was originally settled, and which were opened up by that grand old pioneer, the late Walter Padbury. I do not wonder that he and succeeding pioneers waxed eloquent about the fertility of the Roe-hourne Plains. There is no doubt about them on that score. If they only had the

wheatbelt rainfall, there would be no limit to what could be produced there. I wish to express my gratitude to the Premier for inviting me to participate in that tour. I know it will be beneficial to me, and I believe the whole trip will prove of service to the North-West. I have omitted from my remarks reference to matters concerning my own electorate. I have endeavoured to discuss matters of interest to all sections of primary producers, and the State generally. I have tried to be fair to the Government in my criticism, and have criticised them where I thought they were entitled to it, and have commended them where I thought commendation was justified. I have also condemned the Government where I thought they deserved condemnation, and unfortunately the condemnation has outweighed the commendation. However, as I have not the slightest desire to be unfair, I have endeavoured to be, and think I have succeeded in being, fair in my criticism of the Government. In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the session upon which we are embarking will be fruitful of good work for the people of the State generally. I trust that hon members will exhibit that spirit of sweet reasonableness and compromise regarding the legislation to be placed before them which is absolutely necessary if our labours are to be crowned with success.

On motion by Mr. McLarty, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.17 p.m.