

At the present time the Council do not pay that attention to these thoroughfares that they should do; they show a discrimination against roads and footpaths in front of public buildings, and the road in front of Parliament House might be instanced. The road is absolutely dangerous. Only the other day I saw a horse attached to a dray laden with sand going down that street, and it was as much as the driver could do to prevent an accident happening. It is fairly well known that the reason why these roads are neglected is because rates are not paid on public buildings. The proposed new clause is merely a saving clause and provides that there shall be no discrimination.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 11th November, 1920.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—STATE SAWMILLS, COST OF JARRAH.

At Holyoake and Wuraming.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Works: What is the cost per load of producing sawn jarrah at the State Saw Mills at Holyoake and Wuraming?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: On the ground of public policy the Government feel that they must decline to reply to this question.

At Railway Mills.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Railways: What is the cost per load of producing sawn jarrah at the Railway Mills at Dwellingup?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: On the ground of public policy, the Government feel that they must decline to reply to this question.

QUESTION—DREDGING, FREMANTLE.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that representations are being made to the Commonwealth Government by the Government of Tasmania for the loan of the large dredge now in use at Cockburn Sound Naval Base, for the dredging of rock in the Tasmanian harbours? 2, If the dredge is suitable for dredging hard rock in Tasmania, why is it not suitable for dredging the limestone rock in Fremantle Harbour?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, After the previous reply had been given to the hon. member further information was received, and as a result of consideration by the Engineer-in-Chief, negotiations have been opened up between the Public Works Department and the Commonwealth Government with the object of ascertaining what, if any, arrangement can be made by which the dredge may be available for use in the Fremantle Harbour.

QUESTION—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS, CAPACITY.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Honorary Minister: What is the total number of cattle that can be dealt with annually by the Wyndham Freezing and Canning Works when in full work and with cattle available for slaughter?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Honorary Minister) replied: Assuming that shipping is available, and when the additional storage is provided, the capacity of the Wyndham Meat Works will be 30,000 to 40,000 head of cattle during a season of 25 weeks. The number dealt with in 1919 was 9,281, and in 1920, 18,870, the shortage being due to lack of refrigerated shipping and insufficiency of storage accommodation.

QUESTION—BASE METALS INDUSTRY, CANCELLED LEASES.

Mr. DUFF asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has a list of all cancelled base metal mineral leases in the State—similar to that compiled in respect of cancelled gold mining leases—ever been prepared and printed in pamphlet or book form for free distribution for public information? 2, If not, will he, in view of the many inquiries now coming through from European and American sources regarding our base metals, give immediate instructions that such information be compiled for the guidance of prospectors, investors, and others?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, Yes, although it must be under-

stood that the list will not contain a number of the unworked mines at Northampton and other places where private land is not subject to the provisions of the Mining Act.

QUESTION—IRON DEPOSITS, YAMPI SOUND.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Minister for Mines: Have any steps been taken by either the Federal or the State Government to conserve some of the wealth of iron deposits at Yampi Sound for the benefit of the Commonwealth and of Western Australia?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: By request I instructed the State Mining Engineer to report on the iron deposits at Yampi Sound, Cockatoo Island and Koolan Island, and the report was received by me on the 22nd January last, and early in February I approved of the temporary reserve of all the land not then held as a mineral lease until further notice. Since that date the Queensland Government have purchased a mineral lease on Cockatoo Island, said to contain approximately 20,000,000 tons above sea level, and the Federal Government hold an option over the leases on Koolan Island, said to contain approximately 76,000,000 tons above sea level, of high grade iron ore. Negotiations are proceeding with the Federal Government, who desire the State to co-operate in the maintenance of the deposits on the latter island, to keep them available for Australian use, and to prevent a combination or monopoly obtaining control of what are said to be the largest high grade iron ore deposits in the world.

BILL—NAVIGATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 9th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 106—Closing time for certain exempted shops (partly considered):

Mr. ROCKE: If this clause is passed as printed, will that circumstance exclude the possibility of inserting any other clause dealing with exempted shops?

The CHAIRMAN: If a proposed new clause clashes with any clause now in the Bill, such new clause will be excluded from consideration.

Mr. ROCKE: My desire is to amend Clause 107 by including in it tobacconists' shops. Tobacconists' shops are included in the Fourth Schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Committee, after passing this clause, decided to amend Clause 107, then it would be necessary to recommit the Bill for the purpose of further considering Clause 106.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 107—Hairdressers' assistants:

Mr. ROCKE: I move an amendment—

That after the word "shops," line 1, there be inserted "and tobacconists' shops."

Tobacconists themselves have informed me that they are not desirous of keeping their business premises open after 6 p.m. or 6.30. The principle of closing at 6 p.m. is already established: a man has to get his food, his clothing, and his medicine before 6 or 6.30 p.m.; and he should be able to get his tobacco before that time.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: What caused the select committee to decide upon a recommendation that tobacconists' shops should be allowed to keep open until eight every night of the week was largely the evidence presented to the committee by the legitimate tobacconists in the trade. Under the existing Act they can keep open to almost any hour they like. They do, in fact, keep open until 10 or 11 p.m.; but they themselves desire some more effective control. They represented to the select committee that the unfair competition encountered by the legitimate tobacconists was such that they found it almost impossible to carry on. I understand there are only about half a dozen genuine tobacconists' shops in Perth; that is, shops where hairdressing is not carried on in conjunction with the sale of tobacco. The request was made that tobacconists should be licensed; and it was pointed out that a fairly large revenue would come in if a £5 license fee were imposed on tobacconists not only in Perth but also in the country towns. The witnesses pointed out that Greek café proprietors and small shops in the suburbs sold tobacco and cigarettes during hours when the regular tobacconists were closed. The select committee decided not to recommend a license fee, because the effect of that might be to increase the price of the commodity, but to take away the late night and to allow the tobacconists to carry on until 8 o'clock every evening. We were guided in that respect by the circumstance that there is no possibility of controlling the competitors of the genuine tobacconists. As regards small shops, in them there can be sold after ordinary trading hours only such goods as are appropriate to the particular trade. A greengrocer's shop, for example, would not be permitted to sell tobacco. However, hotels cannot be controlled as regards the selling of tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes. If a provision were inserted in the Bill that hotels must not sell cigars or cigarettes, then there would be no objection to the closing of tobacconists' shops at 6 p.m. The select committee

thought that if a person took a cigar in a hotel instead of a drink, the cigar might not do him as much harm as the drink would. A tobacconist of my acquaintance has told me that he will be satisfied to close at 8 p.m., because that gives the hotels only an hour to sell tobacco goods after he has closed.

Mr. Money: Very few hotels sell tobacco, though.

Mr. O'LOUGHLIN: But hotels do a large trade in cigars and cigarettes. The argument of the tobacconists I have spoken to is that if we compel them to close at 6 o'clock, their hotel competitors will have three additional hours in which to trade in tobacco and cigars. The proposal in the Bill is a fair compromise.

Mr. PICKERING: I oppose the amendment. The argument adduced by the member for Forrest is very sound.

Mr. ROCKE: I am informed that the tobacconists who desire to keep open until 8 o'clock are principally those who have, in connection with their business, gaming shops where betting is carried on, and that the men who trade solely as tobacconists prefer to close at 6 o'clock.

The Minister for Mines: They had plenty of opportunity for giving evidence before the select committee.

Mr. ROCKE: Several of them have made representations to me.

Mr. LUTHEY: Why did not they go before the committee?

Mr. ROCKE: Perhaps they did.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 108 to 117—agreed to.

Clause 118—Overtime to be paid:

Hon. P. COLLIER: Subclause (2) provides that only those employees who reside more than a mile from the factory shall be supplied with a meal or, alternatively, with a cash allowance when working overtime. A similar provision in an earlier clause was struck out. To bring this into line I move an amendment—

That all words after "employed" in line 2, to the end of line 3, be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 119 to 121—agreed to.

Clause 122—Limitation of hours of employment of women and young persons:

Hon. P. COLLIER: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (1) "fifty-two" be struck out and "forty-eight" inserted in lieu.

For many years, in practically every variety of occupation in this State has the 48-hour week been recognised. It may be argued that the circumstances surrounding employment in shops necessitate the employees being em-

ployed for a longer period than 48 hours in a week. But the same argument could be advanced against nearly all the provisions of the Bill, which largely seeks to improve the conditions of shop assistants and others employed in factories.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I see no objection to the amendment, so long as the late shopping night remains abolished. Without the late night the hours work out at about 48 per week.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In order to preserve the principle, recognised in the Bill, that women and young persons shall work four hours per week fewer than adult men, I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of Subclause (1) "forty-eight" be struck out and "forty-four" inserted in lieu.

This principle is recognised in the railway award, and therefore we might well recognise it here.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It must be remembered that the provisions of the clause will apply almost exclusively to smaller towns, where no agreement or award exists. In a small country town, where there are so many opportunities for resting, it might not be any great hardship if a woman or young person were called upon to work 48 hours weekly. I agree that, generally speaking, women and young persons ought not to work the same hours as adult men. I understand that even in the metropolitan area, before there was an award or an agreement, in almost all the larger shops the women and young persons were brought to work much later in the morning than were the men.

Mr. PICKERING: I have consulted some of the business people in my town, and so far as I could gather I found they were satisfied with the provisions of the clause.

Amendment put and negatived; the clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 123—Seating accommodation to be provided for female assistants:

Mr. LUTHEY: The clause contains a provision that there shall be one seat for every three employees. During a slack period most of the assistants may desire to take the available seats. What would happen in such a case?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That difficulty would be easily overcome. The man could sit on the chair and he could take one assistant on each knee.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 124 to 157—agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3—agreed to.

Fourth Schedule:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I notice that clubs are exempted. Meals and accommodation are provided at clubs, and I do not see why those institutions should not be included.

The Minister for Mines: Registered clubs are included. You will see them mentioned in the list.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, but the places mentioned in the schedule are exempt. If I had my way I would close up clubs altogether.

Hon. P. Collier: This schedule only refers to the closing time, and the premises mentioned are exempt from closing at the same time as other places.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for North-East Fremantle is confusing the Bill with the Licensing Act. The question of the licensing of clubs has nothing to do with the Bill. If the hon. member is against the licensing of clubs and desires to have them abolished he should take steps under the Licensing Act. The schedule provides that certain shops, while they have to comply with all the provisions that are laid down in the Bill respecting employees and the conditions of work, are not compelled to close at the same time as other shops. Does the hon. member suggest that a club should not supply meals after 6 o'clock?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But they are exempt.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They are not exempt; the schedule merely exempts them from closing at the same early hour as other business premises. We cannot in a measure of this description permit the Arbitration Court to make an award that the clubs shall close at 6 o'clock when the Licensing Act gives them definite permission to close later. But they have to comply with an industrial award or an agreement just as any other shop has to do.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedules 5 to 7—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1920-21.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Business undertakings:

Vote—Aborigines Cattle Station (Moola Bulla), £8,013—agreed to.

Vote—Albany cold stores, £400:

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a great reduction in this vote over the previous year. I understand that the cold stores have been dismantled or closed down.

The Minister for Mines: We are extending them. They are at present leased and a rental is being paid on them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want some information on the point. Have they not been leased for the purpose of a butter factory? They are not being used to-day for cold storage purposes.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, they are. The butter factory has been attached to the cold stores, which have not been interfered with.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Albany cold stores were opened in February, 1913. They have been consistently losing on account of the lack of patronage on the part of residents of the district.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was not a Labour party white elephant.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The people of Mt. Barker started cold stores a little over two years ago, and practically took away what little trade there was left in Albany. The cold stores have now been leased as a butter factory and store, and are paying a rental of £400 a year, which will relieve the Government of any further cash loss. The expenditure provided on the Estimates is to cover the requirements of the tenants and effect certain repairs.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What is the loss up to date and what have the Government provided by way of interest and depreciation?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Last year these cold stores earned £773, which cost £1,197 to earn. The loss was, therefore, £424. The interest and depreciation for that year amounted to £1,950, and the gross loss was therefore £2,414. The payments have been running on since 1913.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We were told that the Estimates had been carefully prepared, and yet the figures just given by the Minister do not compare with the figures in the Estimates showing an expenditure last year of £1,071 and a revenue of £530.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These are the figures supplied to me. Why they do not balance with the Estimates I do not know. I will inquire into the matter.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Avondale and Harvey Estates, £1,750—agreed to.

Vote—Butter factories, £23,555:

Hon. P. COLLIER: What progress has been made with the State butter factories? Some two or three years ago the Government launched out in this direction, and put forward what was considered to be a very comprehensive policy of assistance to butter factories. How long have these factories been established? Are they operating to-day and where are they situated, and what has been the result in each case?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Busselton butter factory was started as a Government factory in 1916. It had been previously carried on as a co-operative concern. The cost was £3,616, and this has since been raised to £5,217. The output each year since 1916 has increased. Last year the purchases of butter fat amounted to 159,288 lbs. The receipts to producers of this butter fat were £13,560. From this butter fat we produced 183,888 lbs. of butter. I do not know why more butter was produced than butter fat was purchased.

The realisation on this butter was £15,880. The Denmark factory was started in 1912.

Hon. P. Collier: Has any of the money which the Government advanced on the Busselton factory been repaid?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will deal with that later. I think the Scaddan Government started the Denmark factory with the laudable object of assisting struggling settlers. Last year the purchases of butter fat were 27,804 lbs., and the sum of £2,334 was paid to the producers. This butter fat produced 32,087 lbs. of butter. Apparently the butter at Denmark does not expand to the same extent as the butter at Busselton. These 32,087 lbs. of butter produced £2,778. I have a table here showing the capital, revenue, expenditure, depreciation and loss on these factories. It seems that at Busselton for last year there was a loss of £92 and at Denmark £76, a total of £168. The capital expenditure at Busselton was £5,217 and at Denmark £591. Every effort is being made to see that economy is practised. The expenditure this year will be increased. The reason for that is that higher rates have had to be paid for butter fats and also because supplies of butter fats are increasing. More people are going in for dairying; they are getting better breeds of cows giving a greater supply of milk, and so more money will have to be provided to purchase the butter fats. The average price paid for butter fats last year was 21.71d. per lb. and the number of persons supplying the fat was 360.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that for the whole State?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, for these two factories.

Hon. P. Collier: But there are other factories.

Mr. Money: There are only the two State factories.

Hon. P. Collier: Are the others co-operative factories?

Mr. Pickering: That is the position.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I admit that the Minister is at a disadvantage in dealing with these Estimates as he is not the Minister in charge of this department. There are many experts in this House, however, and I would suggest that they assist the Minister to give the Committee some information. In the first place, I would like to know why the local butter cannot compete with the butter from the Eastern States.

The Minister for Mines: In what way?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There must be a reason, and I want some of the experts here to inform us what is the trouble. We find that although butter is bringing a very high price, not only has action been taken by the Government to buy up the Eastern States butter here, but action has been taken, as far as possible, to prohibit the use of margarine.

Mr. Munsie: They have not got the Bill through yet.

The Minister for Mines: You will not have a chance of stopping it.

Hon. P. Collier: Why?

The Minister for Mines: Because it will not go on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I think the health authorities contemplate taking action whereby every dish of margarine in the restaurants will be branded as such, so that it will not enter into competition with butter made in Western Australia. In the old country they show that margarine is supplied by stating the fact on the menu. We should have some explanation regarding this matter because we find that the Government by a guarantee are assisting the Western Australian Butter Factories Association to purchase 250 boxes at a landed cost of 2s. 7½d. per lb. in order to assist the local factories. There is something wrong. How is it that a person can market imported butter here at a cost of 2s. 7½d. wholesale and still be in a position to compete with local butter which is sold at 2s. 8d.? I understand that the local butter merchants are always paid three times as much for commission on the imported butter as they get from the local butter factories, despite which the imported butter is still able to compete with the local article. How can this be?

Mr. Teesdale: Do you think they are mixing it?

Mr. Money: The explanation is: Eastern States trade domination.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not think that is so.

Mr. Money: I am informed that the cause arises from the trade domination in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: My information is quite to the contrary. I am told that the difficulty is that the local people will not grade their butter, and whether graded or not it is put in at the one price. One box is opened and retailed with the result that the consumer is satisfied. The next box opened is not good and the consumer does not buy the commodity again.

Mr. Money: It is graded at the Bunbury factory, and we took a prize at an exhibition in competition with Eastern States butter.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not saying anything against the butter itself, for what I have seen of it is very good, but the fact remains that it cannot compete with the butter from the Eastern States.

The Minister for Mines: Local butter does compete with that from the Eastern States.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It does not. If it were so, why is there the necessity for the Government to guarantee the purchase of Eastern butter already in this State? Further, if there is the necessity for the guarantee, is there an additional guarantee that more Eastern States butter will not be brought into Western Australia to compete with the local article so that the Government may be asked to give yet another

guarantee in order that the fresh supplies may be purchased.

The Minister for Works: People are not so clever as that, are they?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course not. There are a few members in this House, however, who can bring pressure upon the Government. We had a circular read out some time ago which proved that and there is nothing to show that that pressure may not be again brought to bear upon the Government. We have just had the information that the Government's guarantee was to purchase 250 boxes at landed cost.

The Minister for Mines: Where did they purchase it?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The question was asked in another place yesterday and the Minister who answered the question should know something about it. Mr. Duffell asked the Minister for Education whether the Government had acquired the whole or any part of the butter imported from the Eastern States, and, if so, on what terms as regards quantity and price. The Minister replied in the negative, but added that the Government by guarantee had assisted the Committee of the Western Australian Butter Factories Association to purchase 250 boxes at the landed cost, namely, 2s. 7½d. per lb., the reason being to assist the local butter factories in marketing their produce.

Mr. Munsie: How can that action assist the local butter factories?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot say. Surely the Government do not intend to bury it. While I have been a member of Parliament, I have known of many guarantees given by Government and I know that the State always "drops in."

The Minister for Mines: They do not take it off the market at all.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am asking for information as to what they are doing with it.

The Minister for Mines: I would not like to make a wager with you as to whether you know the reason or not.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Estimates we are dealing with refer to the Bunbury and Busselton factories but the others are co-operative factories. The moneys given to co-operative factories are by way of loan and have to be repaid.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That has always been the practice.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I recognise that the Minister for Works, not being in charge of the administration of this department, is not in possession of a full knowledge of matters under discussion. The whole question of the production of butter in this State and the price at which it is put on the market, is of importance to the consuming public. I would like to have some fuller information regarding the position. It seems to me that among the members of the Butter Factories Association or among some others—I do not know who—a ring exists.

The Minister for Mines: I can assure you there is not a ring.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It appears that there is a ring for the purpose of obtaining what might be regarded as excessive prices. I am subject to correction, of course, but it would appear that something of that nature exists. I think that the Prices Regulation Commission—I am subject to correction again—at the request of, or perhaps under the influence of, this association or the butter producers of the State, fixed the price of butter at 2s. 8d. per lb. at a time when butter was bringing 2s. 11d. per lb. in the Eastern States. The price of 2s. 8d. was fixed deliberately. When the price here was fixed at a lower rate than that obtaining in the Eastern States, naturally shippers ceased to send butter here. The Commission deliberately fixed that price in order to shut out Eastern States butter and to make our market available for the local produce.

Mr. Pilkington: It was reduced from 2s. 11d. to 2s. 8d. for that specific purpose.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. While butter was bringing more than 2s. 8d. in the Eastern States the price here was reduced to 2s. 8d., because it was known that butter would not be imported at that price. Having by that method reduced the price of butter to 2s. 8d., and practically shut out all importations of butter, producers here had a monopoly of the local market, and took advantage of it to bring the price of their produce to 2s. 7d. That was not fair.

Mr. Davies: What was the price of local butter previously?

Mr. Pilkington: I think it was fixed at 2s. 11d. for all butter, but local butter was being sold for less.

Mr. Davies: Then the people would have to take local butter, or do without butter?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Probably people had been giving preference to the imported butter, but they now have no choice. They have to take the local butter and pay the price fixed, or eat margarine. The question is whether the price fixed for local butter is not a profiteering price. I do not think the Government were justified in going to the assistance of factories by advancing loans to enable them to establish factories—

The Minister for Works: It is more important to keep the farmers going.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No one wishes to prevent the farmers from keeping going, but if the State goes to the assistance of the butter producer and he is producing, by reason of that State assistance, commodities to an extent which he could not do without such assistance, the people of the State are entitled to some consideration with regard to the price they are called upon to pay.

Mr. Pilkington: The power to fix prices was never given for the purpose of excluding commodities.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. It is an abuse of the powers conferred under the Prices Regulation Act to fix prices which

will shut out all competition. I feel sure that the Commission would not have exercised such powers had not pressure been brought to bear upon them. If I am compelled to purchase locally produced butter, even though I am prepared to pay 2s. 11d. for imported butter, I am entitled to consideration with regard to the price I am called upon to pay for the local article. It seems to me that the price of 2s. 7d. is excessive. Producers in the Eastern States are able to command the high price of 2s. 10d. or 2s. 11d.—probably that is London parity on account of the scarcity of butter in England—but considering that our producers were enabled to carry on by the aid of the Government, the large body of consumers should be protected and should not have to pay more than a reasonable price. Will the Minister say that 2s. 7d. is not an excessive price?

The Minister for Mines: It depends on the conditions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the price of 2s. 7d. per lb. for local butter has not been fixed by the Commission on the basis of the cost of production. It has merely been fixed fairly high in order to exclude all competition. There is a very general opinion abroad that the people are not permitted to obtain imported butter, and are being called upon to pay more than a fair price for the local article. I do not say that producers of butter should not obtain a fair profit over and above the cost of production, but are not we being called upon to pay more than a fair price? I hope the Minister will be able to give us some information. According to the Press the Government, by guarantee, have assisted the committee of the West Australian Butter Factories' Association to purchase 250 boxes of butter at landed cost, namely 2s. 7½d. per lb., the reason being to assist the local butter factories in marketing their product. What does that mean? How will it assist local factories to market their product? Did the Government buy 250 boxes of butter off the market?

The Minister for Mines: The member for East Perth said it was used to grease the wheels.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for East Perth will require a lot of grease to carry him through the troubles which will confront him in the near future, but I do not think that the member for East Perth made that remark. Two hundred and fifty boxes of butter have been purchased and, presumably, put into cold storage. How will this assist the local producers?

Mr. Munzie: Who constitute the Butter Factories' Association?

Hon. P. COLLIER: This information is contained in the reply to a question given by a Minister in another place.

The Minister for Works: I do not think it can be right.

Mr. Pilkington: And by the Minister who arranged the whole matter.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, not by the substitute Minister but by the Minister for Agriculture, whose business it is to know and who is au fait with all phases and all the ramifications of agriculture.

The Minister for Mines: Then you should not question such an authority.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The meaning of his reply is not quite clear.

Mr. Teesdale: You know why it was taken off the market—because it is an important competitor and, the quicker it is off the market, the quicker we will sell our accumulation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: These 250 boxes of butter were coming in and, in the ordinary course of trade, would enter into competition with the local article. In order to eliminate that competition the Government gave assistance to this combination. Apparently the combination could not finance it themselves, but with Government aid they bought these 250 boxes of butter.

The Minister for Works: What does it amount to? Only £1,000 or £1,200.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Quite enough for the State, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apparently it was large enough to warrant these people in approaching the Government for the necessary assistance.

The Minister for Works: It is so small that I do not think it is correctly reported.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am inclined to doubt the knowledge of the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Works: I mean the representation of his knowledge.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This statement is published in this morning's "West Australian." The Government kept the 250 boxes of butter off the market, and it was put into cold storage in order to enable the local butter to be marketed at 2s. 7a. a lb. This imported butter cost 2s. 7½d. Meanwhile the local butter will be sold at 2s. 8d. a lb. When the supply of local butter is no longer available, the Prices Regulation Commission will conveniently raise the price of butter to 2s. 11d. a lb., and then these 250 boxes will be put on the market and sold to the public at 2s. 11d. a lb. Therefore, the Butter Factories' Association will have a double gain. They will have succeeded in shutting out the competition of imported butter, and later on they will make a profit on this deal. For butter which was landed at a cost of 2s. 7½d. they will do doubt charge the consuming public 2s. 10d. or 2s. 11d. per lb. Therefore, the Butter Factories' Association will gain in both ways. Is this the kind of assistance we should render to butter factories?

The Minister for Works: That is business.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It might be very good business from the point of view of the

combination, but what view will the consuming public take of it? What will the average householder think of it?

Mr. Pickering: There are not many complaints about it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This only came out to-day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A big percentage of the people are eating margarine.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I knew nothing of this until I read the Minister's reply in this morning's Press, and how can we expect the general public to know that the Government assisted these people to purchase 250 boxes of butter? In these times the public are too busy trying to scratch a living to be able to follow the ramifications of profiteers and others who are doing well at their expense. If I am correct in the assumption as to the nature of the assistance set out in the reply to this question, I question whether the Government were justified in using their power, and in using public funds to assist a combination to eliminate competition, and at the same time make a profit at the expense of the consuming public. It is not the function of the Government to do this sort of thing. I should like an explanation from the Minister.

Mr. Lambert: It is in conflict with the Federal Constitution Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is in conflict with my ideas of equity and fair dealing and the rights of the general public. The Government stand in the position of agents or the board of directors for the general public. I am quite prepared to accept the Press report as being accurate.

The Minister for Works: The Press are not always accurate. The other day they put in the Legislative Council as the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was only a misprint; they are accurate in this instance. I now have before me a copy of the Votes and Proceedings of another place and the figures are accurate. Can the Minister explain why the assistance was given? Can he explain what was done with the 250 boxes of butter by those who purchased them? Where are they now, and what do the purchasers propose to do with them? We are entitled to have these questions answered because this matter affects the public.

Mr. Willcock: Who are these people?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is the money of the public which has been used to guarantee this purchase.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it that the West Australian Butter Factories' Association are the people who own or control the different butter factories.

Mr. Munsie: That is not put quite accurately. It is the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: With all due deference to the leader of the Opposition I cannot but think that he is putting a lot of special pleading into this matter. There

is probably no one in the House who has greater sympathy for the building up of Australian industries as well as local industries than he. I believe that if the leader of the Opposition had had the opportunity which presented itself during the last 18 months or two years of protecting this particular industry in Western Australia he would have adopted much the same attitude as the Government have done. The most astonishing thing is to find the leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth, the two extreme poles in politics, in agreement on this subject. The leader of the Opposition wants to know what we have done to assist the dairying industry and the manufacture of butter, whether the assistance we have rendered has been of advantage to the State, and whether any action that has been taken to assist the local manufacturer has been detrimental to the consumer. We had to do something to get over that rather intricate subject, supply and demand. We found, taking the seasons in the gross, that the Eastern States could supply more than their own requirements of butter and that they were, therefore, anxious to dump their surplus, amongst other places, in Western Australia. For a certain period of the year we are able to get cheap butter, but at other times we have to pay dearly for it because we are not producing any locally. This condition of affairs continued until the State realised that if we were to meet the position from the point of view of the consumer, we had to establish the industry in this State. The purpose underlying the assistance granted to butter factories by the Government was to enable the local manufacturer of butter to keep going, so that we should not get into the grip of the manufacturer in the Eastern States. As we proceeded we discovered that there were certain periods of the year when we could produce all the butter that we required, but that at other periods we could not do so. It was during the period when we were able to meet the local demand with our own butter that the Eastern States' factories dumped their butter here, in order to cripple our factories. That is what they have attempted to do. Had it not been for the fact that the Government made advances against the local butter in cold stores, which product was being turned out by the co-operative butter factories, these undertakings would unquestionably have been crippled at a time when this would have had a serious effect upon them.

Mr. Pilkington: Do you suggest the Eastern States were underselling the local people?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. Does the hon. member imagine that the butter producers in the Eastern States are so generous towards Western Australian consumers that they would send their butter here and sell it at landed cost, and enable the local merchants to dispose of it at less than could be realised for it in the Eastern States?

Mr. Pilkington: I do not know.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They certainly were not so generous.

Mr. Lambert: That is their business.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is our business to prevent such unfair competition. Will the member for Coolgardie suggest that we should not endeavour to prevent this unfair competition and do what we can to keep out of the State that which will detrimentally affect the products turned out within the State?

Mr. Pilkington: Does that not savour of a breach of the Federal Constitution?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No act of the Government was a breach of that Constitution, but the action of the Eastern States' merchants was a breach of the Constitution because of their unfair competition against an industry in this State. The butter in the Eastern States is controlled by a combination. This combination was made wealthy because of the bonuses paid by the taxpayers of Victoria and New South Wales to assist these people to develop their enterprise. For a number of years, when there was no prospect of butter being manufactured in this State that would interfere with the Eastern States' market, we were treated like niggers. At a conference in the Eastern States it was proposed that the embargo upon butter manufactured in the Eastern States should be lifted, and this at a time when we were starving for butter in Western Australia. When the position is arrived at that unfair competition must be overcome it is often necessary to lose a little money in order to defeat such competition.

Mr. Lambert: How does that coincide with the legislation on margarine; I mean the proposed legislation?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That legislation will not be effective because it will not be passed. The strong combination of butter producers in the Eastern States deliberately attempted to cripple the butter factories in Western Australia. Merchants in this State moreover were doing well as agents for the Eastern States people. Were they going to lose their trade without a fight? The assistance that we have rendered to this industry has been in the direction of helping co-operative organisations, so as to enable the producer to get the full benefit of his labour and the fullest possible profit without anything going to the middleman.

Mr. Lambert: Will you extend that facility to other industries?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We do extend it to other industries. We were interested from the point of view of the community in seeing that these co-operative factories were not killed by unfair competition from the Eastern States. To save the position at a time when our market was flooded from the Eastern States we allowed the Narrogin butter factory, which was then in difficulties, to place a great quantity of butter in cold store. The factory could not go on buying cream unless butter sales were effected, because the funds available were insufficient.

Mr. Pilkington: When was that done?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: About 12 months ago. Those people who had been encouraged to develop the dairying industry by keeping cows and taking their cream to the factory would have been disheartened if there had been no market for their product. We therefore, said deliberately, "You put the butter into cold store and we will make advances against it, so that you can go on manufacturing more butter." Had we not done this we should have been acting detrimentally to the community.

Mr. Munsie: We all agree with that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not going to say anything authoritative about the 250 cuses of butter, but I am sure that very much the same thing was done in that instance as was done in the other. Our butter factories are now at the top of their production for the year. It would have been absurd to have allowed the practice which operated last year to operate again this year against the butter producers of Western Australia.

Mr. Pilkington: Why was butter reduced from 2s. 11d. to 2s. 8d. per pound?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think it will be found that the merchants were selling at 2s. 8d., because they wanted to operate against our own factories.

Mr. Pilkington: Do you know the facts?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The possibilities are that this is so.

Mr. Pilkington: Was it done with the knowledge of the Government? That is the point.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I suppose it was done with the consent of the Government. I have not heard it said that we fixed a price that was below the landed cost, and this is evidence that the butter was sent here at below the price that could be obtained for it in the Eastern States for the purpose of damaging our own co-operative factories.

Mr. Money: And they bragged about it, too?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Before ten I had endeavoured to explain the basis upon which local butter factories are being assisted by the Government, and had mentioned some of the disabilities with which those factories have to contend, owing to unfair trade methods adopted by Eastern States butter producers, who previously found an excellent market in this State. I mention these matters, not by way of answering the queries of the leader of the Opposition, but in order to illustrate the difficulty of establishing a new industry in a country obtaining its supplies from another country. The point exercising the mind of the leader of the Opposition, and also to some extent that of the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington), is the attitude of the department in giving a guarantee to enable certain factories to purchase 250 boxes of butter landed here

from the Eastern States. Reference has also been made to the action of the Prices Regulation Commission in reducing the price of local butter to 2s. 8d., when on the basis of the price ruling in the Eastern States the price should have been 2s. 11d. Both aspects of the matter must be considered together in order that the attitude of the department may be understood. It is true that 250 boxes of Eastern States butter were landed in Western Australia recently. That butter was landed at a time when the local production was sufficient to meet the Western Australian demand and possibly to produce a surplus. I understand that the landed cost of the Eastern States Butter here was 2s. 7½d. per pound. The retail price then fixed for butter here was 2s. 8d.; and the fixing of that price, on the face of it, looked like a deliberate attempt by the Prices Regulation Commission to make a figure which would preclude the importer from realising any profit on those 250 boxes of butter. But even on that basis there could be no complaint, except from the standpoint of the member for Perth, that there was unfair interference with trade between the Eastern States and Western Australia. The only complaint that could be made would be that the consumer obtained the butter at less than its market value. According to the member for Perth the market value was 2s. 11d.

Mr. Pilkington: I did not say that the market value was 2s. 11d., but that that was the price fixed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The supply in Western Australia was, for the moment, greater than the demand; and so the law of supply and demand came in.

Mr. Rooke: The supply was greater than the demand because there was a cheaper substitute on the market.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not necessarily so. The period was that, as I have said, during which our butter factories were producing at their maximum capacity. The local producers immediately saw that unless there was some adjustment of the price here, they would be left with stocks on their hands because of the importation of butter from the Eastern States. Accordingly they were prepared to sell their butter more cheaply; and surely the member for Perth would not suggest that no one shall sell at less than the fixed price unless the Prices Regulation Commission first step in. The local producers were prepared to sell their butter at 2s. 8d. per pound. The Commission said, "If we fix a price of 2s. 8d. per pound, it will be contended that we are excluding Eastern States butter from this market, preventing it from coming here, and that thus we are hurting the consumer." By fixing the price at 2s. 8d. the Commission were able to save the consumers of the State about £175 per day, because 250 boxes of butter, of 56 lbs. each, are about equivalent to a day's supply. When the 250 boxes of Eastern States butter were landed and the local retail price was reduced to 2s. 8d., the

importer said, "I cannot sell at that price, because my landed cost is 2s. 7½d." Thereupon the local butter producers said, "We do not want the importer to be at a loss because of our action. We prefer to take the butter off his hands at landed cost, and still sell our own butter at 2s. 8d."

Mr. Pilkington: What were the local people selling their butter at before the price was fixed at 2s. 8d.?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know. They may have been selling it at 3s. 11d. That does not enter into the question at all. The imported butter had previously been sold at a higher price; but the law of supply and demand, to which the member for Perth referred the other evening, came in, and—

Mr. Pilkington: You should have found out that fact from the Minister for Education, who spoke to you just now.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The price was fixed at 2s. 8d. for the local producer.

Mr. Pilkington: It represented a substantial rise on what he was getting before.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. There is no ring existing in the butter line in Western Australia. If necessary I can prove that.

Mr. Pilkington: I do not say there is a ring.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But that has been suggested. I have some knowledge of the operations of the butter market, because of correspondence I have received from the secretary of a co-operative butter factory in Albany, which has been recently established, and which, quite, naturally, is jealous of its existence. We, too, ought to be jealous of its existence so long as no action of ours in its behalf is detrimental to the local consumer. The possibility of making a loss on the imported butter was removed by the permission granted to the pool to purchase the 250 boxes. There was a probability of the business costing the local consumer £15,000, but we risked even that rather than have the local production destroyed. The eventual result was that the local consumer got his butter at 2s. 8d. per pound, instead of 2s. 11d., which would be the price on the basis of Eastern States parity.

Hon. P. Collier: Were the 250 boxes of imported butter placed on the market here?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know. It does not matter. If 250 boxes of imported butter went into storage, 250 boxes of butter locally produced went on the market; and vice versa.

Mr. Pilkington: Why did not you put the local butter into cold store?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know. What does it matter?

Mr. Pilkington: It does matter.

Hon. P. Collier: What was the object of buying the imported butter?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The local producers approached the Prices Regu-

lation Commission and said they were prepared to sell their butter at 2s. 8d. per pound. The importer of the 250 boxes could not put his butter on the market to be sold at that retail price, because his butter had cost him 2s. 7½d. per pound landed. The local controllers of butter then said, "We do not want the importer to suffer a loss, and we do not want the community to suffer by having to pay 2s. 11d. while we can sell at 2s. 8d." When there is a prices Regulation Commission in existence, there is no use in asking the local consumer to pay even one farthing per pound more than necessary. The fact remains that 250 boxes of butter were put into consumption at 2s. 8d. per pound. It does not matter whether the butter in those boxes was actually the butter from the Eastern States, or whether it was butter produced locally. There was a certain quantity of butter put into consumption, whether it was imported butter or local butter. In either case the effect was exactly the same.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you ask me to believe that the local butter producers bought that imported butter so that I might not be compelled to pay 2s. 11d. per pound for it? Is that your argument?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have not suggested anything of the kind. I said that the local butter producers were at that time producing sufficient to meet the local demand, and possibly to produce a surplus. The butter imported from the Eastern States was landed at a time when the fixed price was 2s. 11d. retail. The landed cost of that imported butter was 2s. 7½d. per pound. The local producers said, "As we have all the butter that is required for local consumption, we are prepared to sell at 2s. 8d., so that our butter may be put into consumption, as it ought to be."

Hon. P. Collier: Why did they fear the competition of the other butter at a higher price?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It was not a question of competition at all. The man who imported the butter at 2s. 7½d. landed cost wanted to sell at 2s. 11d.

Hon. P. Collier: Why not allow him to do so?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member would be the first to complain that the consumer was required to pay something more than he should be paying. On account of the purchase of the shipment of 250 boxes of butter, that commodity went to the consumer at 2s. 8d. instead of 2s. 11d.

Hon. P. Collier: It is too thin.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot follow the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. P. Collier: I cannot follow the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Surely the leader of the Opposition desires that butter should be sold at the lowest possible price. The fact remains that it was by

allowing the pool to purchase the butter that the consumer got it at a cheaper rate.

Mr. Lambert: I understood that there was a surplus locally.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is another aspect that we have to consider. Local producers cannot supply our full requirements all the year round. We depend on the Eastern States for butter during certain periods. If we acted upon the suggestion that is now put forward we would be asking one man to sell butter at 2s. 11d. and another man to sell butter of an equal quality at 2s. 8d. I do not think that any hon. member will contend that the local product is at all inferior to the Eastern product.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not too bad. The butter sold at 2s. 8d. is superior and the butter at 2s. 11d. is inferior. Is that the case?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: You are putting up that bogey yourself. I did not suggest that the local people were afraid of the Eastern product. They said that in fairness to the man who is importing butter, and in order to follow out the principle on which prices have been fixed in this State, the importer should be given an opportunity subject to the invoiced cost of landing, to sell his butter at a reasonable profit. That is the basis on which we fix our prices in Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: Why not sell in the open market at a reasonable profit?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we did the consumer would have to buy butter at 3d. more than he should pay.

Mr. Pilkington: And where has the butter gone?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Surely the member for Perth can see that it does not matter whether the butter from the East is put into cold storage and the local product sold, or the local product placed into cool stores and the imported butter sold, so long as it is made available to the consumer at the same price, namely, 2s. 8d.

Mr. Pilkington: I say the consumers are not getting it at that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I say they are.

Mr. Pilkington: Do you know that for a fact?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not follow the butter market up, of course—

Mr. Pilkington: No, of course you do not know.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What butter was it that was taken back by the "Zealandia" last week?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know.

Hon. P. Collier: The consumer is not getting that butter at 2s. 8d.

Mr. Pilkington: And never will.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not see the difference between the 250 boxes of imported butter being sold and the local butter stored or vice versa. It makes no

difference so long as the price is the same to the consumer.

The MINISTER for Works: They do not want to see it. I have played the game myself, too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot understand why hon. members object to the Government giving a guarantee against certain butter which may be put into cool stores to enable the consumer to get it at a cheaper price.

Hon. T. Walker: That is not the question. You are begging the question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Lord help me! I declare the consumer is getting it at a cheaper price.

Mr. Pilkington: Even if you say it very loudly, it does not make that statement any more true.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If it will impress the hon. member I will say it very quickly.

Mr. Pilkington: Even then that will not make it any less untrue.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is a question of density. I say the facts are there.

Mr. Pilkington: The facts are there, but you do not know them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member said that the price was 2s. 11d. and he declared that the Commission fixed it at 2s. 8d. to prevent the Eastern States butter coming in. What does that mean? The hon. member admits that the consumer is getting butter to-day at 2s. 8d. Where is the untruth?

Mr. Pilkington: The consumer was getting local butter for less before. That is a fact you do not know.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know he got it for less than 2s. 8d. At one time we could get it for less than 2s.

Mr. Pilkington: Yes, but he got it for less immediately before the price was fixed at 2s. 8d.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He was getting it for 2s. 11d.

Mr. Pilkington: He was getting it at 2s. 8d.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Does the hon. member know that for a fact.

Mr. Pilkington: I have been informed to that effect. I am not in the butter market myself.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Keep at him.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: All I am concerned with at the moment is the criticism of the Government's action regarding the guarantee. The Government's attitude in guaranteeing that money to the pool for the purpose of lifting that butter and thus reducing the price to the consumer by 3d. per lb. should be commended and not condemned by hon. members. We should go still further in that direction in order to assist the consumer. What strikes me most at the present juncture is that two who are at the extreme poles of politics—the leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth—appear to be of

the one idea and positively throwing bouquets at each other, on a question regarding which they are really in total disagreement with each other.

Mr. Lambert: If they are the poles, I do not consider that the Equator, in the shape of the Government, is doing any good.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Personally I consider the Government's action even if it had no effect, was worth trying. As a matter of fact, it did have an effect, not only in the interests of the consumer, but of the producer as well.

Mr. Munsie: What is going to be the effect on the finances of the State later on?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is not the first time we have done such a thing as this. The leader of the Opposition guaranteed a gold mine years ago.

Mr. Munsie: That is not answering the question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We do this every day. The real point is whether the object the Government had in view was correct or not. The leader of the Opposition has not taken exception to the amount involved. All he takes exception to is the question of whether the action of the Government in practically pledging a certain amount of the taxpayers' money was justified from the point of view of the community.

Mr. Lambert: The action was taken so that the importers from Victoria would not lose money.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Or on the other hand there was the question whether the consumer should pay 3d. a lb. more so that he should not experience a loss.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yet you said there was a surplus locally.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Now I see things. This is where the member for Perth and the leader of the Opposition have come together. It is because they complain that our local producer has not been unduly squeezed by Eastern States competition and forced to sell butter at less than its value.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the Eastern States butter was sold at 2s. 11d., and the local producer sold at the same amount, where is the squeezing of the local producer?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is not the point. Underlying all this criticism is the point that they say the local producer should not be getting 2s. 8d.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Nothing of the kind.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: What is the complaint then?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have heard it all right.

Mr. Munsie: You have been talking for an hour and a half and you have not explained it yet.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have not been attempting to explain it.

Mr. Munsie: You cannot explain it.

Hon. P. Collier: You have been doing very well in evading the point.

Mr. Munsie: He never went near it.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I stated the facts regarding the fixing of the price at 2s. 8d.

Mr. Munsie: You gave us everything except what we asked for.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: And I stated why the Government had made the guarantee regarding the 250 boxes.

The Minister for Works: It involved about £1,600.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot see how we can lose a penny of it.

Mr. Lutcy: Why was there any necessity for it to be guaranteed at all?

Mr. Munsie: Where has the butter gone?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member said it was on the table at Parliament House.

Mr. Munsie: I did not say anything of the kind.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Well someone said it.

Member: You are bushed.

Mr. O'Loughlin: You do not seem comfortable at any rate.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know whether I am making a statement to the House or not. All I want to do is to make the position thoroughly understood. I am not particularly concerned about the price of butter at the moment.

Hon. P. Collier: You have succeeded ably in confusing everyone. No one knows where we are.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I am concerned with showing the position of the Government. The action taken by the Government was without much risk, and it had the effect of reducing the price of butter to the consumer, which meant a saving of about £175 a day for the consumer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where has the butter gone then?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Notwithstanding that, we left a fair margin of profit for the producer, and preserved the interests of the industry. We have been trying to conserve the interests of that industry for years past. Unless the Government are prepared to give the co-operative companies a chance to exist against this competition, they will go out of existence.

Hon. T. Walker: That is a different argument altogether.

Mr. Munsie: It has nothing to do with the point.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I declare it is the basis on which we have been acting.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I observe that the Minister is amazed to find the leader of the Opposition and myself to some extent in agreement. I would point out that when the leader of the Opposition and I are in agreement, then the leader of the Opposition is almost certain to be right. I listened to the explanation of the Minister and I cannot but admire the manner in which, before the adjournment, he rose to explain

a matter of which he knew absolutely nothing. I know something. I am not sure that my information is correct, but I knew enough to assert that when the Minister went back a year, a year and a half and two years, and talked, in a very loud voice, about something entirely different, he was talking of matters foreign to the question he was asked. I knew he was not able to explain the question. I knew that he had no information, good, bad, or indifferent about the subject on which the discussion has taken place. During the tea adjournment he interviewed the Minister for Education. He is the Minister who knows all about it. And I presume that during that time he got a certain amount of information, but apparently not as much as he ought to have got.

Hon. P. Collier: He has talked about everything but the point raised.

Mr. PILKINGTON: It is perfectly clear that the Minister, before tea, did not attempt to touch any of the facts which he has touched upon since tea. It is quite clear that he did not then know them. Without being a Sherlock Holmes, I have gathered where the Minister got his information. Before tea the Minister knew nothing whatever about the matter; now he knows but very little. I know substantially what the facts are. If I do not know, and if the public do not know, and if hon. members do not know what the facts are, it is no credit to the Government. If my facts are wrong, the attitude of the Government ought not to be one of triumph, but ought to be one of humble penitence. Prior to a fortnight ago the price of butter was fixed in this State at 2s. 11d. That price enabled butter from the Eastern States to be imported and sold here at a reasonable profit. I presume the price was fixed at 2s. 11d. because it permitted of the sale of that butter at a reasonable profit. At that time there was a large quantity of local butter, and a good deal of that local butter was sold at a very humble price, something like 2s. 4d. That was the position. That is in accordance with the Minister's own statement. Then the people concerned put their heads together. And what was done? The powers of the Prices Regulation Commission were grossly misused for the purpose of fixing the price of butter at a price which would almost eliminate the competition from the Eastern States and yet allow the local producer to get a very much better profit than he was getting before.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the point.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Now let us follow those 250 boxes of butter. Without being a betting man, I would not mind laying any part of a penny that it has not come into consumption. Why? It has been taken off the market. If that butter was on the market at 2s. 8d. the local commodity would not sell until the imported article was gone.

The Minister for Works: It is only one day's supply.

Mr. PILKINGTON: But it would get in front of the local butter, and so it will be kept until the local butter is sold. The whole object of this ramp is to use the powers of the Prices Regulation Commission for the purpose of excluding the imported article from the East and enabling the local producer to get a good price. The hon. member says there is nothing wrong in that. I trust his sense of propriety will by degrees improve.

The Minister for Mines: Have you seen the balance sheet of the co-operative company?

Mr. PILKINGTON: To examine the balance sheet would not enable me to come to any other conclusion upon this performance. I want to point out the seriousness of using the Prices Regulation Commission for this purpose. In the first place, the object of the Prices Regulation Commission was to, if possible, reduce costs. I do not believe it has had that effect, but nevertheless that was the object.

Mr. Pickering: It did in this case.

Mr. PILKINGTON: What it has done in this case has been to increase the price of the local article.

Hon. P. Collier: That is so.

Mr. PILKINGTON: There is no sense or reason in cutting out the 2s. 11d. Eastern article, except to raise the price of the local article.

Mr. Pickering: It was to preserve the industry.

Mr. PILKINGTON: To preserve the industry by raising the price of local butter in Western Australia. That is the use which has been made of the Prices Regulation Commission. I say with confidence that it is a grossly improper thing that the Government or anybody else should persuade the Prices Regulation Commission to use their powers for this purpose, which is wholly alien to the object for which they were appointed.

The Minister for Works: Do you say that the Government did that?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I say it is an improper thing for the Government to do.

The Minister for Works: Do you say they did it?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I do not know whether they did it, but I strongly suspect that they did. I have very good reasons for believing that the Government were a party to this proceeding.

The Minister for Works: You are not justified in making that statement.

Mr. PILKINGTON: If the hon. member will assure me that the Minister for Education did not meet persons representing the butter factories and the Prices Regulation Commission together, I will accept his assurance.

The Minister for Works: I will say that the Government never induced the Prices

Regulation Commission to raise the price. You have no right to make such a statement.

Hon. W. C. Augwin: You may not have been in it.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I have made my statement and have gone as far as I am prepared to go. I am not going further than I am justified in going by what I know.

The Minister for Works: You do not know what you have stated there.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Everything I have stated I have absolutely sound ground for stating.

The Minister for Works: You have not.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Well, I will leave the Minister to his own opinion. He obviously refuses to give the assurance which I said I was prepared to accept. The first objection, therefore, is that the Prices Regulation Commission are being used for an improper purpose. If this is to go on, if this is a proper course, where is it going to stop? If the Prices Regulation Commission are to be used for the purpose of preventing competition from the Eastern States, where is it to stop? Are the Prices Regulation Commission to be asked to fix prices in regard to other goods manufactured in Western Australia in respect of which there is competition from the East? If the Government jam factory were now in working order, would the Prices Regulation Commission fix the price of jam? Why not? There is no reason why local butter should be favoured above all other local products. And it would be a most deplorable state of affairs if it became known that the Prices Regulation Commission could be approached for the purpose of getting them to give a form of protection to the local product against the Eastern States. It was not for that purpose the Commission was appointed. There is another objection which I am sure will be greatly appreciated by the member for Coolgardie, namely, that this is a form of protection which is equivalent to a protective tariff.

Mr. Lambert: I am no more in favour of that form of protection than are you in favour of free trade.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Very well, yet this is a form of protection.

Hon. P. Collier: A very pernicious form.

Mr. PILKINGTON: A very pernicious form; and it is a most peculiar thing to find the Minister for Mines advocating this very pernicious form of protection when he has just joined a party in whose platform one plank is the abolition of protection.

Hon. P. Collier: He has not been long enough in the party to be acquainted with the platform.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I do not know whether the Minister for Mines has failed to read the platform which he has promised to observe, or whether he has now become so confused at reading the various platforms which he has from time to time promised to follow, that he is not aware of the fact that

this plank is in that particular platform of which, for the moment, he is a follower.

Hon. P. Collier: He will be out of the party again before he has time to read the platform.

Mr. PILKINGTON: There is a further point which I should like to make in regard to this matter. It is this: Apart altogether from what may be the law, under the Federal compact under which we joined the other States in Federation, one of the main points of union, one of the matters which was discussed from end to end of Australia was that trade and intercourse were to be absolutely free and untrammelled between the States. Now the Minister for Mines has confessed that what was done was done for the purpose and with the object of preventing goods from the East coming to this State and entering into competition with the local article.

The Minister for Mines: Your imagination is running wild.

Mr. PILKINGTON: And it is indeed a most unhappy thing that any Minister of the Crown should stand up in Parliament and advocate a course which is entirely at variance with that Federal compact. I may add that, not only is it improper that that should be done, but it is particularly unfortunate at the present time that such a course should be adopted. Probably before long we shall be discussing with the other States and with the Commonwealth changes in the Constitution, and we should at least enter the council chamber of that convention with clean hands, able to say that we at any rate have honoured the Federal compact, both in letter and in spirit.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not intend to say very much, but the member for Perth, who has distinguished himself this night in the rôle of a candid friend, scolding all and sundry connected with the Government, was not man enough to say straight out what he wished the House to infer.

Hon. P. Collier: I thought he was very clear.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He would not say it straight out. What the hon. gentleman wished the Committee to infer was that the Government have deliberately instructed and used the Prices Regulation Commission—

Hon. T. Walker: No language which he used could bear that construction.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member said the Government had used the Prices Regulation Commission for improper purposes. If the hon. member honestly believes this, he has no right to remain in his place unless he takes the proper course of tabling a motion of want of confidence in the Government.

Mr. Munsie: I believe it would have a chance of being carried on this question.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If he can prove his assertions, such a motion ought to be carried. If he cannot prove what his

words convey, he has no right to remain in the House. But the hon. gentleman cannot take his courage in his hands. He can stand up as he has done time after time since he has been in Parliament and make insinuations, but he will not put his ideas into language which the man in the street can understand.

Hon. P. Collier: Oh, go on!

Mr. Munsie: I do not think anyone misunderstood him to-night.

Hon. T. Walker: His words were only too clear.

The Minister for Mines: It is wonderful how you have taken him to your bosoms. There must be something wrong somewhere.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I challenge the member for Perth to take the only honourable course open to him in the circumstances. The words he used were, "The Government have used the Prices Regulation Commission for improper purposes." Having told us that, he has no right to remain in the House unless he takes the course which I have indicated.

Mr. Johnston: Why spur him on?

Mr. Munsie: We must have some explanation regarding that butter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member for Perth tried to camouflage the affair by talking about the Federal compact and free and unrestricted intercourse, and he added that if this State went into convention to reconsider the Federal Constitution it should at least go in with clean hands. Does the hon. member forget that not two years have gone by since the Eastern States deliberately used their powers with disastrous effect on the timber trade, as the member for Forrest well knows?

Mr. Pilkington: I said that we at least should have clean hands.

Hon. P. Collier: You are trying to justify one rogue on the ground that there are other rogues.

The Minister for Mines: I do not like this; there is something wrong.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Does the member for Perth know that the biggest timber firm in this State—

Hon. P. Collier: Let us stick to butter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A firm with which he is very closely allied, too, took very strong steps in connection with the matter of timber, and although one wrong does not justify another wrong, I do not think the hon. gentleman comes from the race of people who turn the other cheek to the smiter. If anyone smacked the hon. gentleman I think he would try to smack back very quickly. For him to come here and preach in this way is very small indeed.

Hon. P. Collier: He smacked you pretty severely with his tongue.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not wish to say anything further, except that I challenge the hon. member, as member for Perth and as an honourable gentleman, to take the only course which an honourable man

can take, and give notice of want of confidence in the Government for having done what he has alleged. If he can prove the charge—

Hon. P. Collier: Will you give caucus a free hand on the vote?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If he can prove the charge, then, as I said before, the Government have no right to remain in office.

Mr. Pilkington: Will you tell us what they have done?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They have not done you. Whom the hon. gentleman has done, God only knows.

Mr. Johnston: A very able address on the butter question!

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister has been very clear in his explanation about those boxes.

Mr. Munsie: Now we know where they are and all about them.

Mr. MONEY: The subject before the Committee is that of the butter factories of the State.

Hon. P. Collier: And do not forget the timber.

Mr. MONEY: In the past we have heard a lot about the necessity for production, and of the necessity for conserving the State finances.

Hon. P. Collier: That has been done very well.

Mr. MONEY: Although many efforts have been made, approximately no less than half a million of money was paid to the Eastern States during the last 12 months for butter.

Mr. Lambert: We got the equivalent, didn't we?

Mr. MONEY: As the result of the encouragement given by past Governments for many years to the producers of this State, we have arrived at the stage when we have produced sufficient butter to meet the requirements of Western Australia.

Mr. O'Loughlen: For a certain period of the year.

Mr. MONEY: I have read often of the ill-effects of monopolies, and I was astonished at the support given by members to the policy of importing butter from the Eastern States. I doubt whether even yet we have had the true facts with regard to the importation of Eastern States' butter. I am told, and I believe on reliable authority, that there is a gentleman in Western Australia who controls the importation of butter. I have no hesitation in giving the name of that gentleman as it was given to me. It is Mr. Manning, who makes a very big living out of commissions. During the period in which we have not produced sufficient butter to meet the requirements of the State, that gentleman has certainly supplied practically the whole of our wants. He knows that at the present time we are producing sufficient butter for our own consumption, and that it is unnecessary to import a single pound of butter from the Eastern States. Having that knowledge, did he stop

importations? We know that he did not. Further, we know what he did and what he threatened to do. He undoubtedly was out to continue the full importations during the period when we could produce full supplies. He had no sympathy with Western Australia. He got his living by trading with the Eastern States. He had a monopoly of the butter business and was going to do his best to keep it. If nothing had been done, what would have been the position? The butter which has so far been produced in Western Australia has been manufactured for consumption only within the State. We have never manufactured butter for export. There is a considerable difference between the butter manufactured for local consumption, which must be used within two or three weeks, and butter for export, which has to be kept for four, five, six, or even seven months before it would be consumed. We have not yet reached the stage when we can manufacture butter for export. Therefore, unless the locally produced butter were consumed in the State within two or three weeks, it would be a loss to the State. The average period during which it would keep would not exceed four or five weeks, and it could not be shipped to Europe in that short space of time. We have encouraged settlers to go on the land and to produce butter. We are endeavouring to overtake the deficiency of half a million annually in the finances of the State. The settlers have worked and done everything they have been asked to do, and now some members would have us withhold a little necessary assistance when they have no market for their produce. Should we say to these settlers, "We refuse to listen to you; we are in Federation, and this butter from the Eastern States may still be brought in, even if it does ruin you and your factories?" If nothing had been done what would have happened to the factories and to the dairymen? I have not heard from any member so far any suggestion as to how the difficulty could have been overcome, except by way of the guarantee given by the Government, and the steps taken by the Government. No member has told us in what other way it would have been possible to tide over this present difficult period of three or four months. I have not heard a word of sympathy for the producer. In all the discussion that has taken place, not one word of sympathy with the producer has been uttered.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He is getting the cash; he does not want sympathy.

Mr. MONEY: I know well of what I am speaking. Years ago we were importing nearly all the potatoes we required, and our producers were urged to grow sufficient to meet the needs of the State. Eight years ago our potato growers succeeded in producing more potatoes than were needed. I knew one man who grew over 40 acres in the one year, and he lost £500 for his trouble because the market was over supplied. Did he get any sympathy? Not a scrap. Who cared for him? Nobody.

Mr. O'Loughlen: When he gets £35 a ton for his potatoes, does he shed any tears for the consumer?

Mr. MONEY: Potatoes only bring £35 a ton when there is a scarcity; and when they have to be imported from the Eastern States.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A lot of growers made good money last year.

Mr. MONEY: Directly the grower produces potatoes and to spare, they can be bought in the market for £6 15s. a ton, and the grower does not get any benefit from his labour.

The Minister for Mines: He cannot grow them for that.

Hon. P. Collier: Why not shut out the importation of potatoes as well as butter? You cannot get the Government to back you up in that.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Bunbury has the floor. If any hon. member does not agree with his views, he will have an opportunity to refute them later on. I cannot listen to a dozen members speaking at once, and I am not going to try to.

Mr. MONEY: It is to the benefit of the consumer that butter should be produced in Western Australia. In spite of all we have heard about the ruling price of 2s. 8d. a pound, if butter in excess quantities had not been produced within the State, the price would have been 2s. 11d. or 3s. a pound. Consumers to-day are enjoying the benefit of butter at 3d. or 4d. a pound cheaper as a result of the butter produced in excess of our immediate requirements. Instead of importing potatoes from the Eastern States at £35 per ton, our producers have benefited consumers by making available potatoes at £6 10s. or £6 15s. a ton. These are facts which cannot be disputed.

Hon. P. Collier: Facts? Rubbish!

Mr. MONEY: The producers benefit the consumers, and the greater the quantities they produce the lower the prices become. The producers benefit the consumers in every way.

Hon. P. Collier: The more butter they produce, the greater the price they ask.

Mr. MONEY: The producer is not going to produce butter and potatoes unless he receives a fair profit for them. I feel that instead of all the undue objection and criticism which we have heard, it would have been better if members had indulged in a little constructive criticism and told us what should have been done to conserve the interests of the producer and the consumer if the steps which have been taken had not been taken. If we desire to encourage people to produce, we must look after their interests.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Minister for Mines stated that the Government desired, in subsidising these butter factories, to establish the industry in Western Australia. Practically every member of the Committee is in accord with the policy of giving liberal en-

couragement for the establishment of such factories.

Mr. Teesdale: You have an extraordinary way of showing this.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not want any interruptions from the fog-horn at the back of the Minister. The Minister went on to say that the Government had provided the money necessary to enable these factories to purchase the cream required to continue making butter. This is a serious departure for the Government to make from the accepted policy in this regard. Why should the Minister endeavour to lead the Committee to believe that we on this side are not in sympathy with the policy of developing this industry? I have no desire to touch upon the constitutional aspect of this departure on the part of the Government.

The Minister for Mines: No constitutional point arises in any way.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Prices Regulation Commission have fixed a price for butter which precludes competition from the Eastern States. In that way we are directly interfering with trade between the States. If on top of this the Government use the credit of the State with which to buy butter to put into cold store, in order to prevent competition, they are committing a double offence against the Federal Constitution. This action leaves it open for other industries in Western Australia to say that because imports are threatening the local article, the Government should take these also off the market. The local co-operative butter factories have the position in their own hands. If the supply is greater than the demand, it is easy for them to put their surplus into cold stores and to refrain from buying from the Eastern States. From the speech of the member for Bunbury I gather that the desire of the Country party is that the credit of this State should be used to buy off competitors in the Eastern States. If that is the policy of the Government, the country should know about it. I believe that some little time ago local butter could have been purchased at several pence per lb. below the price fixed. The butter produced in this State will not keep. Probably that accounts for the fact that so much of it is put into cold store.

Mr. Money: It will not keep for six months. It is not required to keep for that length of time.

Mr. LAMBERT: If it is the policy of the Government to use the credit of the State for the establishment of butter factories, would they be prepared, in the event of there being competition from the Eastern States, to buy up the imported surplus and prevent it from entering into competition with the local article?

The Minister for Works: Would you support a policy of that kind?

Mr. LAMBERT: I want to know if that is the accepted policy of the Government? The time is coming when there will be a limit to the extent to which Parliament is prepared

to go in this direction. We on this side of the House are fully seized of the importance of establishing butter factories in the State, but if it is intended to go beyond that, and buy in articles which may come into competition with our farmers and to use the credit of the State for this purpose, the people should be advised of the fact. If this sort of thing is to happen in regard to butter it may happen in regard to other things.

The Minister for Works: It is a question of judgment and responsibility.

Mr. LAMBERT: Up to the present we have been given no information which would enable us to come to a conclusion as to whether the Government were justified in their action or not. We should know if this is the accepted policy of the Government.

The Minister for Works: Move a no-confidence motion.

Hon. T. Walker: You are dying for an advertisement.

Mr. LAMBERT: The ordinary natural law operating will bring about the natural death of the Ministry. However, there is nothing for the Minister, if he is in charge of these Estimates, to get shirty about. The operation of the proposed margarine Bill would have been a most scandalous thing for Western Australia, and would have reacted most detrimentally on the consumers of this State. Nine-tenths of the people connected with the margarine trade here thought the measure was designed specially to assist the co-operative butter companies, which have a pull through the political party with whom the Government are associated.

Mr. Pickering: That is your idea.

Hon. T. Walker: There are the facts. The Bill has been withdrawn.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Minister has said that that Bill is not to be proceeded with.

The Minister for Mines: You know nothing of that Bill. It has never been published.

Mr. Munsie: That is how people come to be writing letters about the clauses of the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: You know nothing about the Bill.

Mr. Munsie: Other people do, though.

Mr. LAMBERT: I can tell the Minister something about the clauses of the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: You know more about the Bill than I know.

Mr. Munsie: You know that the Bill has been in type, anyhow.

The Minister for Mines: I have never seen it.

Mr. LAMBERT: I have never seen a draft of the Bill; but I can assure the Minister that, if its provisions are as reported, the Government are making a serious mistake in not adhering to the regulations for the sale of margarine which obtain in other countries.

The Minister for Mines: How do you know about the provisions of the Bill? I have never seen it.

The CHAIRMAN: I fail to see what all that has to do with the vote.

Mr. LAMBERT: It would be well if this particular vote were postponed. Possibly the Minister is at a disadvantage, these not being his Estimates. Let the vote be postponed, so that the Minister for Agriculture may have the fullest opportunity of explaining this incident of the butter purchase, and of making clear the attitude of the Government as to the purchase of Eastern States butter or of any other article imported into Western Australia.

Mr. TEESDALE: If ever members of this Chamber have occasion to be proud of themselves, it is to-night. For about three hours we have had nothing but a question of butter, and we have had it principally from the members of the Opposition. No question of principle is involved, and no expense has been incurred by the Government; but three solid hours of the time of this House have been wasted over a lump of butter. When at Home a few months ago, I was told that the only matter of importance to Western Australia during the most fearful period of the war seemed to be the butter question, our newspapers teeming with letters about the shortage of butter. It was objectionable to me to think that we in this country had nothing more pressing to be concerned about during that awful time than the shortage of butter. To-night the position is somewhat similar. The country has suffered no loss over this butter purchase. The Prices Regulation Commission took certain action which to my mind—and I have had some experience of business—was perfectly legitimate, and which has been taken hundreds of times before. In view of the complaint from the Opposition side that we cannot get through our Notice Paper, it is a great pity that so much of our time should be wasted over a piffling matter of 250 boxes of butter.

Mr. MUNSIE: The last speaker said there had been three hours' discussion on a question of butter. However, the Minister for Mines, despite all his power of bluff, occupied at least three-quarters of an hour in endeavouring to explain a very simple matter. He talked all round it, but never once came to the point. With the first half-hour of the Minister's address every member on this side of the House is in absolute accord. Let me add that I was rather surprised to hear such arguments coming from the Minister for Mines in his present seat. We know that it is the policy of other gentlemen occupying seats on the Ministerial bench to oppose absolutely any State interference with private enterprise. Those hon. gentlemen say they wish to assist the primary producers to establish butter factories; but the farmers got more assistance from this party, when in power, than ever they have got from the existing Government. What has the argument been all about?

The Minister for Works: That is what I want to know.

Mr. MUNSIE: The following question was asked in another place yesterday:—

Hon. J. Duffell asked the Minister for Education: Have the Government acquired the whole or any part of the butter imported from the Eastern States, and, if so, on what terms as regards quantity and price? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, what is the reason for this action?

To the first question the Minister for Education answered, "No." The Minister did not answer in the affirmative, but he went on to give an explanation. We here want to know what the Government did and why they did it. The Minister for Education was afraid to answer Mr. Duffell's question in the affirmative, because he did not want to give the reason why. The Minister in charge of these Estimates here has said something about timber, concerning which we did not question him. The Minister for Mines dealt with the establishment of butter factories for about three-quarters of an hour, but without answering the question we have asked him. The Minister for Education proceeded to give the following explanation—

No, but the Government by guarantee have assisted the committee of the Western Australian Butter Factories' Association to purchase 250 boxes at landed cost, namely 2s. 7½d. per pound.

To the second half of Mr. Duffell's question the Minister for Education replied that the reason for this action was—

To assist the local butter factories in marketing their product.

What I was anxious to learn first of all was how the guarantee by the Government became necessary. It seems that the Westralian Farmers, Limited, have not so much money as we thought they had. I understood they could easily raise £10,000 for the next general election; but now it appears that they cannot even finance the purchase of 250 boxes of butter.

The Minister for Mines: The matter has nothing to do with the Westralian Farmers, Limited. They have not been mentioned in connection with it.

Mr. MUNSIE: The West Australian Butter Factories' Association is the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. Pickering: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. MUNSIE: That is my opinion, and I shall stick to it unless the Minister in charge of this vote or the Minister for Mines will tell the Committee who these people are.

The Minister for Mines: They are the representatives of the people who have been assisted by the Government in this matter, but they have nothing whatever to do with the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am pleased to have that explanation from the Minister. If he had given it when he rose, it would have saved a lot of trouble. The Minister now tells

us that it is the people responsible for the conduct of the co-operative butter factories who ventured, with the Government guarantee, upon the purchase of 250 boxes of imported butter. What I now want to know is whether the people of this country are likely to be put to any expense in connection with the 500 boxes of Eastern States butter sent back by the last steamer? Can the Government give any information in reply to that question?

The Minister for Works: Give notice of the question. We cannot answer it now.

Mr. MUNSIE: Probably not; but Ministers should have been able to answer the questions asked previously. Neither Minister has yet told the Committee why the butter was purchased, or what has been done with it. Two hundred and fifty boxes of butter came here, and I believe that if the facts were known it would be found that they came to Watson.

The Minister for Works: Who is Watson?

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister knows Watson's Produce Store as well as I do. Watson is the largest individual butter supplier in Western Australia. Believing that Watson was responsible for the importation of the butter, the Government took him on, instead of taking on Manning, who actually imported the butter. I believe the fact is that Manning imported the butter to Watson's order. I believe that butter is in cold storage yet. The Minister knows it.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know anything about the matter.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister for Mines should ask his colleagues what was the intention of the Government in purchasing the butter, and why the Government stopped that butter from coming into competition with local butter. There is the point made by the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington), a point I wish to emphasise, that prior to the alteration by the Prices Regulation Commission of the price of Eastern States butter from 2s. 11d. to 2s. 8d., local butter was being sold in Perth shops at 2s. 5d.

The Minister for Mines: It did not come my way.

Mr. MUNSIE: You went for the Eastern States butter. You were not patriotic in the matter.

The Minister for Mines: Don't worry about the patriotic side.

Mr. MUNSIE: Even when butter had been fixed at 2s. 8d. by the Prices Regulation Commission it was possible to buy butter at 2s. 5d.

Mr. Pickering: Can you wonder after the advertisement you have given it to-night?

The CHAIRMAN: Let me once more appeal to members for order. Only one member at a time can expect to get the car of the Chair.

Hon. P. Collier: The member for Sussex so seldom gets an opportunity to speak.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not want to labour the question any further, but I hope the Minister in charge of the Estimates will give the Committee an explanation as to the reason why the Government acted in this way. I want an assurance from the Government that the State will not be mulet in any greater loss on account of the butter which has been returned to the East.

Hon. P. Collier: What about the Attorney General joining in the explanation?

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not know why we should import butter from the Eastern States and send it back again without taking it off the ship, unless some pressure were brought to bear by someone.

The Minister for Works: Do you make the assertion that the Government have sent 500 cases back?

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not make it.

The Minister for Works: Well, why do you make it?

Mr. MUNSIE: Will you deny that the Government are responsible?

The Minister for Works: I do not know anything about it.

Hon. P. Collier: All right. Now what about your colleagues?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Those who do not belong to the farmers' party.

Mr. MUNSIE: I have been told something about this before.

The Minister for Works: You must not take notice of what you hear outside.

The CHAIRMAN: It is for the Minister to obey the Chair as well as other members.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister is not going to make me say things which I never said. The Minister is not going to get past these Estimates before I get some information.

Mr. Teesdale: Do you suggest there was anything dishonest?

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not say that there was.

Mr. Teesdale: What are you talking about then?

Mr. MUNSIE: Since the discussion has started this evening, it has led me to believe that there may be something dishonest, or Ministers would have given us the information.

The Minister for Works: Rubbish!

Mr. MUNSIE: Why do the Government not explain it?

The Minister for Works: Damned rubbish, too!

Mr. MUNSIE: I have not suggested that there was anything dishonest, but the attitude adopted by Ministers is calculated to lead members to believe that such might be so.

Mr. Teesdale: You are attacking a Minister and taking advantage of the absence of his colleague, who knows more about the business.

Hon. P. Collier: There are five Ministers. Why cannot they explain?

Mr. MUNSIE: I know that the Minister in charge of the Estimates, and the respon-

sible Minister who is in another place, had a consultation over this question to-night. Why is the Committee not given any information?

Hon. P. Collier: Why don't they ring him up now?

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister responsible is here now in the building; they do not have to ring him up. I want to know where that butter is.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is most peculiar in his methods. I have been told that words were given to us to hide our thoughts. Apparently the hon. member thinks that the Government had something to do with 500 cases of butter being sent back. He does not know that the butter has gone back.

Mr. Munsie: I know I do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, why did you speak about it as you have done?

Mr. Munsie: Don't avoid the question.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member cannot bluff me like that.

Mr. Munsie: You cannot bluff me. You will be here till 1 o'clock in the morning.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will stop here till midday to-morrow if you want to. It is puerile for the hon. member to take up the attitude he has done to-night. Does he know of anything the Government have done that is dishonest?

Mr. Munsie: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, why do you insinuate? Why not be manly?

Mr. Munsie: What about the 500 cases of butter? Do you know anything about it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member does not know whether any butter has been sent back or not.

Mr. Munsie: Do you know?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I do not.

Mr. Munsie: You cannot answer the question then, and I cannot either.

Mr. Teesdale: And you do not care whether it went back or not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Coolgardie wanted to know what was the policy of the Government regarding assistance to industries. I thought it was quite clear that the Government have assisted in the establishment of various industries, and if members consider that the Government should not use their judgment and accept responsibility when confronted by a crisis affecting the life of an industry, then I cannot help it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why not give the information to the Committee?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The leader of the Opposition would have taken the same action himself.

Mr. Munsie: Yes, but we would have given the information to the Committee. Why don't you do so now?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am dealing with the member for Coolgardie. I

trust that policy of assisting industries, as I have mentioned, will be continued. I believe that if the leader of the Opposition were on the Ministerial side of the House he would continue it as we are doing. So far as this unfortunate lot of butter is concerned, the Government gave a guarantee that this butter should be paid for. What is the amount of the guarantee? If we lost the lot, it would only run into about £1,500 or £1,600.

Hon. P. Collier: That is nothing to a country with a deficit of about five millions.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A straw shows which way the wind blows and if the Government were wrong on a principle like that, they might be wrong in larger matters. In this particular transaction, the Government have given a guarantee that the payment for this butter will be shouldered by the Government if necessary.

Mr. Munsie: Payment to whom?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The persons from whom the butter has been bought. The Government have given the guarantee in order to assist an industry which they have been helping to develop. Surely if the Government have done wrong in following the lead of the Labour Government—

Mr. Munsie: Don't try that game on.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Is the allegation of the member for Perth correct?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I dealt with the member for Perth as I will deal with any other member who makes the same allegations.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you say it was not correct?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth said the Government made use of the Commission for improper purposes.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He said that the Minister and the representatives of the Butter Factories Association and the Prices Regulation Commission met in conference together. Is that correct?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth made a statement—

Mr. O'Loughlen: Oh, answer me.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Your bluff will not stop me. The member for Perth said that the Government used the Commission for improper purposes. If the Standing Orders would allow me to say what I would say if I were outside, I would say it was a malicious lie. As the Standing Orders do not permit me to do so, I cannot say that now.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is very clever, but you have not given an answer. I do not know whether you are aware of the facts.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth made another statement. Will the member for Forrest father this statement of his? "The Committee was grossly misled in the interests of the local producers."

Mr. O'Loughlen: Did the Minister for Agriculture meet the Prices Regulation Commission and the butter producers in conference?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is the whole point. We want to know if that is correct.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot tell the hon. member.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is the point to be cleared up.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What does the hon. member want? What is the object of this? Is he charging the Government with doing something dishonourable?

Mr. Munsie: I have no such intention.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At worst, all that can be charged against the Government is an error of judgment. It has taken three hours of the time of the Committee to explain this matter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Two hours of that was taken by your side of the House.

Mr. Lambert: Do you appreciate the fact that we have the right to an explanation?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Every member has a right to have an explanation but no member has a right to make charges against the Government unless he is prepared to stand up to them like a man.

Mr. Lambert: The member for Perth is one of your supporters.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No member has a right to stand up and charge the Government with improper conduct unless he is prepared to substantiate his charge.

Mr. Lambert: Do not bracket me with the member for Perth. All I ask for is an explanation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member cannot get any more explanation from me, as I have no more to give. All I can say is that whatever is in the minds of hon. members, judging by the debate, there is no foundation for their complaint. The only hand the Government have had in the affair has been to assist the butter producer. And that assistance has not been confined to the butter industry, for other industries also have been assisted by the Government.

Mr. Munsie: Will the Minister answer this question?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not call very many more times without naming somebody.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So much has been said on so little foundation that I am justified in asking hon. members to formulate their charges, if they have any.

Mr. Lambert: We are merely asking for an explanation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can give no further explanation to the hon. member. Let him give notice of a string of questions for the next sitting, and we will furnish the answers.

Mr. Lambert: Why not postpone the argument until an explanation can be obtained from the Minister for Agriculture?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We will not postpone it. We have been very generous in allowing this discussion at such length.

Hon. P. Collier: In allowing!

Mr. O'Loughlen: Answer the question now, and it will finish it.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Minister admits that if the Government make a loss on the 250 boxes of butter it will amount to about £1,700. Will the Minister give an assurance that the guarantee entered into by the Government does not implicate the Government any further than the 250 boxes of butter? That is what I want to know.

Mr. Teesdale: If this debate goes much further it will get us all chucked out.

Mr. MUNSIE: On a previous occasion I was nearly three hours trying to get the Minister to give us a definite assurance about another matter. We did not get that assurance, but merely a vague promise that no money would be paid until Parliament met. Now we are on the eve of another recess, and we find the Government are implicated in something else.

The Minister for Works: Not implicated at all. That is an offensive word.

Mr. MUNSIE: Well, they are committed to a scheme which, if it goes wrong, will cost them nearly £2,000. I want an assurance from the Minister that there shall be no further complications in connection with the guarantee given.

The Minister for Works: How can you get an assurance of that sort? Who can tell what may happen to-morrow?

Mr. MUNSIE: There is the point! The Minister admits that no one can say what it is going to cost.

The Minister for Works: No. What I remarked was, who can tell what will happen to-morrow?

Mr. MUNSIE: I want to know whether the commitment will end with the 250 boxes of butter, or is it likely to cost the country any more?

The Minister for Works: As far as I know, it ends there.

Mr. MUNSIE: As far as you know! That is but poor satisfaction.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There has been a good deal of comment over the fact that I saw the Minister charged with the administration of the Prices Regulation Act. Mr. Colebatch is the Minister charged with that administration. Any Ministerial act arising out of a decision of the Prices Regulation Commission is submitted to him for approval. This matter was dealt with by the Commission in conference with the butter producers of the State, owing to a statement I made that there was surplus butter in the State while importations were coming from the Eastern States, and that while the price was fixed at 2s. 8d. the importation could not profitably be carried on. A conference was

held. The Commission adhered to 2s. 8d. as a maximum—notwithstanding that the butter cost 2s. 7½d.—subject to the committee representing the local producers undertaking to take the butter off the hands of the importers at landed cost. The cost of picking it up was guaranteed by the Government, and a further indemnity given by the producers that the Government would suffer no loss. That was the arrangement made. Is it simple enough?

Mr. Munsie: And it ends there?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It ends there. When the matter was first discussed, it was estimated that the guarantee might run to £15,000; but it ended with the 250 boxes.

Mr. Lambert: That explanation could have been given us at 6 o'clock.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I told you that.

Mr. Munsie: You did not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At the risk of incurring the displeasure of the member for Roubourne, I should like to say a word or two. The hon. member in a rather heated manner—

Mr. Teesdale: No, regretful.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Regretful if you will, wanted to know what the object of the Opposition was in raising this discussion. He wants to know what is wrong. My point is this—and here comes in the question of supply and demand so ferociously argued by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Money) to-night. He says that the law of supply and demand will reduce the price. The law of supply and demand has not reduced the price of local butter to the consumers. The action of the Government in backing the butter manufacturers has not tended to allow the supply to flow freely into the State; it has tended rather to eliminate, or at least to restrict, the law of supply and demand. The action of the Government has had the effect of raising the price of local butter to the consumers to the extent of 2d. or 3d. or 4d. per pound. Will the member for Roubourne say it is not well worth the time of the House to discuss a question which concerns the whole of the consuming public to the extent of 3d. or 4d. per pound on the butter consumed?

Mr. Teesdale: There is no proof.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is proof. The present price of local butter is 2s. 8d. Prior to the arrangement made by the Government local butter could be purchased at 2s. 5d. The effect of this arrangement has been to raise the price of local butter to the general consumer. That is where I question the wisdom of the Government's action in backing the butter producer. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) during the present session has moved a motion asking that the Government should protest to the Federal Government against the imposition of protective duties. The hon. member stands uncompromisingly for freetrade. He says the farmer should have the right to purchase all his requirements in the open market, that his goods should come here free from any im-

position of the tariff. The attitude of the hon. member really is that the farmer should have free trade when he is purchasing, but should have good, substantial Government protection for all that he has to sell.

Mr. Pickering: Does he get it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Now the hon. member is again shifting his ground. If he were true to his principles he would object to this system of affording protection to the butter producers. The hon. member wants it both ways, free trade for the farmer's purchases, and high protection for his sales. Butter must not be allowed to flow freely into Western Australia, Government assistance must be requisitioned to cut it out. Protect the farmer when he has something to sell, but let him get the benefit of the world's markets when he wants to purchase something.

Mr. Pickering: I have not spoken on this subject.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member has submitted his motion this session, and we all know that he stands for free trade, for a free flow of commerce, but that when it is a question like the price of local butter he wants protection right up to the hilt. It is a matter of the utmost importance to the consuming public, this 2d. or 3d. or 4d. per pound extra on the price of butter. We are not even permitted to buy Eastern butter at the price fixed by the Commission. And in so far as we have lent protection to the local producer, he has taken advantage of that protection to raise the price of butter to local consumers.

Mr. Teesdale: The Government have taken 2s. 11d. butter off the market and sold it at 2s. 8d.

Mr. O'Loughlin: It is in the cold store.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have not disposed of it.

Mr. O'Loughlin: And in three months' time it will be sold at 3s. 1d. per pound.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I feel quite confident as I said earlier this evening—and the statement has not been denied—that the Eastern States shipment of 250 boxes of butter has been purchased for 2s. 7½d. a pound, that these people have it securely locked away in cold storage, and that when the local supply gives out and the market is no longer required for the local product, the purchasers of that butter will release it from cold storage and will probably charge 2s. 11d. or 3s. a pound for it. They will make a profit on the deal. The Prices Regulation Commission will raise the price from 2s. 8d. to 2s. 11d. or 3s. per pound.

The Minister for Works: And the whole profit will be about £147.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is very easy for the Minister to talk about a profit of only £147, but an increase of 3d. a pound in butter—the difference between 2s. 8d. and 2s. 11d.—is of vital importance to the average working householder. If that butter had been sold when it came here, it would have been available to the public at 2s. 8d. a pound, be-

cause the purchasers could not have charged more for it. Later on, however, that same butter, which could and would have been sold at 2s. 8d., will be sold at probably 3s. a pound. I am prepared to go as far as most members in endeavoring to encourage local production. The record of the Labour party for five years is a guarantee of that fact, not only with regard to the men engaged in the production of butter, but to those engaged in all other production.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But not to the detriment of others.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Our record stands, and it shows that we have meted out fair, legitimate and honest treatment to the farmers, but I cannot shut my eyes entirely to the rights of the consuming public. I am not going to keep the producer in mind all the time and exclude from consideration the consumer. That is what my friends opposite do. They look through the spectacles of the producer all the time and of the producer only. I do not blame them. The producers play an important part in building up and developing the State. They need and they are justified in receiving legitimate Government assistance, but not to the exclusion of those people who are not producers.

Mr. Johnston: Local supplies are keeping the price of butter down.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Local supplies have not kept down the price of these 250 boxes of butter. The local price is 2s. 8d. per pound and that butter could have been sold for 2s. 8d. a pound. Although we have had the assistance of two Ministers in addition to the member for Reebourne, who has lent his aid and advice to the Ministers, I do not think that the matter has been cleared up to the satisfaction of many members of this House, and I do not think it has been cleared up to the satisfaction of those members of the public who are aware of it. If the discussion has served no other purpose, it will, if reported at length in the Press, have the effect of enlightening the public who are labouring under the disadvantage of high prices, particularly for butter. Thus the discussion will have served a good purpose, and I hope it will make the Government cautious with regard to any action they take in future to assist any combination of this kind to the detriment of the general public.

Mr. PICKERING: I did not intend to speak on this subject, but in view of what the leader of the Opposition has said, I feel that I must justify myself. The leader of the Opposition said that I moved a motion for the abolition of the protective tariff on all commodities used in primary industries. That is quite true. While I recognise that this is the correct policy for Australia as a whole, it is not fair for primary industries to have to suffer under a high protective tariff and gain none of the advantages. Therefore, if for no other reason I am justified in supporting the action of the Govern-

ment in this matter. I have never heard in this House a worse advertisement for Western Australia than has been voiced to-night. Not one voice has been raised from the Opposition in favour of a Western Australian product like butter.

Hon. P. Collier: There has been nothing said against butter from this side of the House.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, there has been.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The only thing said against it was said by the member for Bunbury.

Mr. PICKERING: The whole comparison has been to the detriment of the produce of Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not so. It has been a question of prices.

Mr. PICKERING: I should like to read a few words from the "West Australian" to illustrate the position of butter produced in Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: We know it before you read it.

Mr. PICKERING: Then I shall not read it. The Western Australian butter recently exhibited in Bendigo took top place against the best Victorian butter.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member need not direct his argument to this side of the House. The quality of Western Australian butter was never questioned by us.

Mr. PICKERING: The reason why Western Australian butter has not brought the same price as Eastern States butter is because it is belittled by people living in Western Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: By whom? You must not charge this side of the House with that sort of thing.

Mr. PICKERING: The whole trend of the argument was in that direction.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The member for Bunbury was the only one who mentioned it and he spoke the truth.

Hon. P. Collier: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member has charged some member on this side of the House—he has not mentioned whom—with having spoken disparagingly of the quality of Western Australian butter. I protest against the statement of the hon. member because no such remark was made by any speaker on this side of the House. The quality of Western Australian butter was questioned by a member sitting on his own side of the House, but by no member of the Opposition.

Mr. PICKERING: The member for North-East Fremantle in speaking on this subject, apart from any other member, directed attention to the fact that Western Australian butter would not keep.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I did not. I said that Western Australian butter was not graded, and this was the reason why they could not sell it.

Mr. PICKERING: And that Western Australian butter was not equal to the Eastern product. There is no question in my mind about that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Go ahead. I shall answer you presently.

Mr. PICKERING: I contend that Western Australian butter is equal in quality to any butter manufactured in Australia. Yet, the production of butter in Western Australia has been belittled.

Hon. W. C. Angwin interjected.

Mr. PICKERING: When I interjected some time ago, I was called to order.

Hon. P. Collier: You have no right to persist in saying that we questioned the quality of Western Australian butter.

Mr. PICKERING: I differ in that regard.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Sussex made charges against the Opposition. I have listened to every word of the debate and I have not heard a word by one member on the Opposition side of the House to the detriment of butter produced here, other than the statement made by the member for North-East Fremantle that our butter was not graded. The member for Sussex will please confine his argument to the question before the Chair.

Mr. PICKERING: I must accept your ruling, Mr. Chairman, although my opinion remains as before. I say that the butter industry in Western Australia has passed through very strenuous times before attaining its present position.

Mr. Smith: It has had a hot time to-night.

The Minister for Works: Yes, I wonder it has not melted.

Mr. PICKERING: The Victorian butter industry was established under a bonus of 2d. or 3d. a pound from the Government. The Western Australian butter industry has to struggle through without any such assistance. I have represented a butter producing district for a good many years. I remember when there were seven contributors to the Busselton butter factory. To-day our butter factories are supplying the whole of Western Australia's requirements. Last year, when the position was somewhat similar and shipping tonnage was scarce, the Government permitted boat space from the East to be filled with butter brought from the Eastern States in competition with locally produced butter which we could not sell.

Mr. Johnston: And excluding things which we wanted.

Hon. P. Collier: As a believer in free trade you could not object to that.

Mr. PICKERING: When free trade cuts both ways I believe in it. The unfortunate producer of butter was in the position of having to pay cold storage charges on every pound of butter manufactured in the State.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A big quantity of the butter is coming from the wheat districts.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not mind where it is coming from, so long as it is produced in Western Australia. I want to see our butter industry getting a fair deal in this House.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is, too.

Mr. PICKERING: If the Government have adopted such tactics as will ensure a market for the producers of Western Australia, I am behind them every time and all the time. I do not care if it costs the Government £1,500 or £15,000!

Hon. P. Collier: Or 15 million pounds!

Mr. PICKERING: This is an industry which is vital to the State.

Mr. Smith: What about the price-fixing commission?

Mr. PICKERING: The control of butter has resulted in the price being reduced by 3d. per pound. It may be said that the price of local butter has been increased, but in the main the consumer has secured butter for 3d. per pound less than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Lambert: By being forced to buy it.

Mr. PICKERING: The consumer has thus been assisting to establish an industry which will stick to him.

Mr. Lambert interjected.

Mr. PICKERING: When the hon. member was speaking I did not interrupt him, and I hope he will allow me a few minutes in which to finish. Anything which can be done to encourage the butter industry of this State should be done, and the same applies to any other industry. All sorts of questions have been brought up in the House when the prices of commodities were against the consumers. Take wheat and potatoes. To-day we are faced with the position that many potato growers will be up against it through over production. If we were in earnest in our desires to protect the producer and give him a fair deal, we should not quibble over this trifling guarantee given to men who are willing to meet it if the occasion should arise.

Hon. P. Collier: I am not quibbling about the guarantee.

Mr. PICKERING: This guarantee has assisted the butter producers of this State.

Hon. P. Collier: To get a higher price.

Mr. PICKERING: No, it has protected the industry and enabled it to get the right price.

Mr. Teesdale: The guarantee may not have to be paid.

Mr. PICKERING: It will not have to be paid; it is only a guarantee. What is the fixed price for butter in the Eastern States to-day?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you know?

Mr. PICKERING: No, but if the fixed price is that ruling in this State, our producers are entitled to every penny of the fixed price.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I did not intend to say anything more on this subject. When I introduced it I merely sought information.

Mr. Jones: Have you got it?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have got a little from the member for Bunbury. I wanted to know the reason why the local butter

could not enter into competition with the butter from the Eastern States. I wanted to know why there is any necessity for the Government to give this guarantee.

Mr. Johnston: One reason is—

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member should be the last man to speak, because he cannot trust the Government in anything unless it is in his favour.

Mr. Johnston: You do not want an answer to your question.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I made the statement that I had been informed by a retail trader that the difficulty with the local butter was that it was not graded. They had asked repeatedly for it to be graded, but this was not done. They might get one box which gave every satisfaction to customers, but the next box might be so bad that they could not sell it. That is the statement I made. The member for Bunbury told us the reason. He is the only member who has given us any reason. He said it was because the local butter would not keep for more than a few weeks.

Mr. Money: Indefinitely.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member said it would not keep for more than a few weeks. He said it was necessary for the butter to be put on the market immediately. That is a very good reason indeed. At the same time, and with all due regard for the butter factories we are starting in this State, I would point out that the Bunbury butter factory paid when butter was on the market at 1s. 11d. a pound.

Mr. Money: Bran and pollard were then only half the price.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is also true that local butter was sold in the stores in Perth cheaper than the imported butter. If the arrangement suggested by the member for Perth was actually made, it was a wrong one for the Government to make. If I could prove for certain that this action was taken I would move that the Commissioners be dismissed.

Mr. Teesdale: It was only surmise on his part. He had no proof.

Hon. P. Collier: It is correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I believe the Minister for Works knew nothing about it, and I do not think he would be a party to a transaction of that description. The question was asked whether a Minister did not in conjunction with the butter people and the Prices Regulation Commission make the arrangement suggested by the member for Perth.

The Minister for Works: I knew nothing about it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some of the Ministers who do know something about it are away from the House. Country shows are certainly of importance, but the business of the country is of greater importance. Ministers should be here to answer these questions.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The member for North-East Fremantle asked a question and then proceeded to answer it; quite erroneously, but to his own satisfaction. He asked why the local retailers did not sell Western Australian butter at this season of the year, and his answer was that it was not graded and would not keep.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I said people had told me that.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Last year as well as this year, we were able to supply practically the whole of the local requirements. The reason why the local butter factories have trouble in getting their products on the market should be well within the knowledge of the hon. member, from his acquaintance with industrial and trading conditions. He should know that the retailers prefer to sell the local butter, that it is better than the imported article, or at all events as good as anything in Australia, but they say that if they sell the local butter now and refuse to buy the imported article, during the summer when we cannot supply our own requirements, they will get nothing from the Eastern States, who will only supply those retailers who draw regularly their supplies from that source. The question of grading and quality referred to by the hon. member does not enter into the matter at all. If it were to enter into it, it would be to the advantage of the local product.

Mr. Willecock: And to the disadvantage of the butter.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Narrogin butter factory is producing four tons of butter a week. If any hon. member asked for that butter he could test its grade and quality, and I am sure he would find it to his satisfaction. I have accompanied directors of the factory to retailers of butter, particularly at this time of the year, and the retailers have told us they would like to take the Narrogin butter and would prefer to do so on account of the demand for it, but they know that unless they take their normal supplies from the imported article they will be unable to get it later on.

Hon. P. Collier: That is where the Government ought to come in and see that these supplies are forthcoming, even if they have to purchase them from the Eastern States.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Unfortunately there are retailers in Western Australia engaged in selling Eastern States butter of an inferior quality to our own, and who are prepared to stop at nothing to keep the imported article on the local market to the detriment of our butter factories. I commend the Government for the action they have taken—I do not know exactly what it is—in that they showed a proper sense of the responsibilities of their position in the direction of protecting the local butter factories. The capital of the Government is invested in these factories. The Busselton factory is entirely a Government undertaking. In other districts the Government have

subsidised the factories to the extent of pound for pound and upwards on the capital raised. It is the duty of the Government to do this, and I am glad they have recognised the necessity for protecting the money which people have invested in an industry that is of such value to the State as a wealth producer.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Goldfields Water Supply Undertaking, £126,614:

Mr. MUNSIE: I see from the Estimates that the interest and sinking fund provided is the same as that for last year. A Bill was brought before us last session for the purpose of reducing the amount paid in sinking fund on this scheme. I do not know whether that Bill has become law and received the Royal assent or not. It is reported by those who should be in a position to know, that a section of the pipe line from the No. 8 pumping station to Coolgardie is in a particularly bad way. I have been informed that if the demand for water on the goldfields again increases, it will be necessary to use the force pump at the No. 8 station, but that the use of this pump would have to be preceded by the re-laying of the whole of that section. The pipes are said to be in such a bad state that they will not stand the pressure of the force pump. The method at present adopted is to pump the water into tanks elevated to a considerable height, and for the water to be allowed to gravitate from the No. 8 pumping station into Coolgardie.

The Minister for Works: That is the principle of the whole scheme. As long as the other end is open there is hardly any pressure at all.

Mr. MUNSIE: It has been ascertained within the last two years, I am informed, that the officers in charge could not get the necessary quantity of water through the pipe by this method of gravitation, and that they had to use the force pump direct to the reservoir in Coolgardie. What progress is being made with the manufacture of pipes for the water supply to Hampton Plains? If the Bill, to which I have referred, has not yet become law, it would be as well if it were allowed to stand over for a time, because the probabilities are that the Government will have to find sufficient money to re-lay the portion of the track I have brought under notice.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe I am correct in saying it has been found that the course proposed by the Government could not be followed. I will ascertain the correct position and make a statement on the subject next week. It has only been through the indefatigable supervision and experience of the engineers in charge of the pipe line that we have been able to continue to use the track without disaster.

Mr. Munsie: You should give some credit to the employees and the length runners.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When I speak of the engineers I am not referring merely to the salaried officers, but to all the men engaged on this scheme, from the boy to the head engineer. All are playing their part conscientiously and well on behalf of the State. If it had not been for these men the pipes would not have been able to do the work they are doing to-day. Pipes are being got together as quickly as possible for the conveyance of water to the Hampton Plains, and the work of laying these pipes will be proceeded with as soon as it is considered that a favourable opportunity has arrived. Probably the hon. member knows better than I do the prospects of the Hampton Plains. I do not know whether the mines are turning out well or not. Presumably if the prospects of the field were not favourable the hon. member would not be asking the Government to lay 20 miles of pipes. Tanks for the service have been purchased. They formed part of the plant at one time in possession of the whaling company at Albany. The Railway Department purchased this plant under favourable terms, and sold it to the Water Supply Department under terms that were favourable to the railways but not to the Water Supply Department.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

Mr. HARRISON: Is it still the policy of the Government to extend water supplies into the agricultural areas, and into certain settlements that have recently been taken up? Have the Government pipes in stock suitable for these extensions?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The policy of the Government is that whenever an extension is required and can be profitably carried out, we do it; but we are not prepared to put out extensions where we know that the income which will result cannot be regarded as even a circumstance in comparison with the interest and other charges involved. Several propositions referred to me during the past 12 months I have been reluctantly compelled to turn down. One of these related to Brnee Rock, to which district the hon. member's remarks possibly referred. We do not keep a stock of pipes. To begin with, we have not money for that purpose.

Hon. P. Collier: It would be a bad business deal if you had money lying idle in stock like that.

Mr. Harrison: Are pipes procurable?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: During the time I have been Minister we have not had money to put pipes into stock, and, even if we had had the money, it is doubtful whether we could obtain them. We have had the greatest difficulty in obtaining 6in. pipes for the freezing works at

Wyndham, and the 4in. pipes for Hampton Plains. We can only obtain 3in. and 4in. pipes in Western Australia from our own State Implement Works; and even there we have had much trouble in securing supplies. Pipes to-day cost about £20 per ton; when I was doing the Perth water works they were being landed at about £5 per ton.

Mr. DUFF: I trust the Minister intends to give consideration to the Westonia mines, which have been a prolific source of revenue to this country. They are paying 10s. per thousand gallons for water. The high cost of mining requisites to-day—I say nothing of the cost of labour because I consider that labour receives no more than it is worth—is absolutely against any profit accruing to the companies, which indeed are just existing. Were it not for the advance in the price of gold, those mines would have to close down. The Westonia extension of the Goldfields Water Supply scheme has been a highly payable proposition, and the Westonia mines have been trying for a long time now to get the price of water reduced from 10s. to 7s. Three mines at Westonia are using on an average about £400 worth of water per month; and that is quite apart from the town consumption. Seeing that the Westonia extension was paid for in the first six months of its use, and seeing that the field has been going on for eight or nine years, it is up to the Government to grant a little reduction. The department tell us that they charge us 10s. because we do not draw all our water from their pipes, but obtain some of it from our mines. That excuse has been used quite long enough.

Mr. HARRISON: The reason why I questioned the Minister with regard to extensions is that this very evening I received a letter from settlers at Goomarin Hill, out north from Burracoppin, stating that their great difficulty is to get water; so I was wondering whether the Government had pipes in stock. I endorse the representations made by the member for Claremont with regard to the Westonia mines, and I wish to remind the Minister that as a business proposition the Westonia extension of the Goldfields Water Supply scheme has been on the highest mark of profit to the department. The department have lost the Edna May mine as a consumer, and if other mines are to be developed a reduction in the price of water is urgently necessary. I suggest to the Minister that he should go into the figures and should also watch the chart which is kept in the Water Supply Department's head office, when he will find that the Westonia extension is the most profitable one he has.

Mr. LAMBERT: On this vote I wish to draw attention to the question of water supplies to the small pastoralists along the pipe track. The department should make a reasonable effort to encourage those small pastoralists, who have taken up land alongside the pipe track right up to Kalgoorlie.

The Minister for Works: Some of them can look after themselves pretty well.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know what the Minister is driving at.

The Minister for Works: What about Creedon's dam?

Mr. LAMBERT: If the Minister's experience in connection with that dam has been unfortunate, it is probably owing to unbusinesslike methods in the department. The owner of the dam drove a hard bargain, though such action seems foreign to Mr. Creedon, who has resided on the goldfields for fully a quarter of a century and is known to be a most generous-hearted man, one who has assisted prospectors and others to the extent of thousands of pounds. Possibly he regards the arrangement relative to the dam as in the nature of some return for the assistance he has rendered to prospectors and others during a number of years. Cheaper water for the mines has been urged year in and year out. The water scheme must be controlled upon a business basis, and I think the Minister is attempting so to control it. But that is not the only consideration. There is the consideration of fostering the effective settlement of the country alongside the pipe track and the utilisation of that country for stock purposes. That can only come about if the Government supply stock owners with water at a reasonable price, especially during the hot season. It is impossible to raise cattle profitably while water is charged at 7s. 6d. per thousand gallons. As the Minister knows, some little time ago I sent on a petition from the small stock owners in question.

Mr. Duff: But it is rougher still to mine with water at 10s. per thousand.

Mr. LAMBERT: True. It is generally recognised that the mining industry, so far as the areas I am speaking about are concerned, must end sooner or later, and, therefore, from the standpoint of the water scheme, that industry can hardly be considered on the same basis as primary production from the soil. We must go back to that ultimately, and I hope that, so far as is reasonably possible and in keeping with the public policy to run the water scheme on commercial lines, the interests of the small stock raisers will be conserved.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are assisted in some centres.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is lower down.

Mr. Teesdale: In the North they are hauling water for very long distances.

The Minister for Works: Very long distances, indeed.

Mr. LAMBERT: In these areas it is impossible to raise cattle and buy water at 7s. 6d. per thousand gallons. There is a big belt of country there capable of great carrying capacity if only the Government would lend sympathetic consideration and supply water at a reasonable price. Both Sir Henry Lefroy when Premier, and the present Premier have agreed that something should be done to assist settlement and promote cattle raising wherever possible. The whole of the goldfields areas right through to the Murchison would provide good cattle country if only

water were made available at a reasonable price. It should be the set policy of the Government to encourage the small cattle raisers. I presented a petition dealing with this matter, and I recognise that it is not for the Minister to deal with it offhandedly, as it affects the revenue of the State. I know that, generally speaking, the permanent heads of the Water Supply Department are opposed to a reduction in the price of water.

The Minister for Works: They are not.

Mr. LAMBERT: I said that generally speaking that would be their attitude.

The Minister for Works: They have nothing to do with it. It rests with the Government, not with them. Why bring in the officers of the department at all? If anything is wrong, pitch into the Minister and the Government.

Mr. LAMBERT: I thought the Minister would rely to some extent upon the assistance and advice of the responsible officers. I know the Minister for Water Supply is fairly self-contained in that respect, but I thought that, to some extent, he might consult the permanent heads in matters of this description. I hope that in this particular instance he will not consult them, but will act in accordance with his own commonsense. In a proposition such as this, I do not think that the revenue of the Water Supply Department will be detrimentally affected, bearing in mind that it will probably mean the establishment of a permanent industry.

The Minister for Works: Bring forward a practical scheme and then we will talk about it. I want no wild cat scheme.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am pleased to hear the Minister say that. I trust that he will give sympathetic consideration to my proposals. The Government have put down wells and dams and have in every possible way endeavoured to encourage settlement in other parts of the State, and I hope that they will deal sympathetically with the small pastoralist on the eastern goldfields.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is it the intention of the Government, having regard to the eminently satisfactory prices the farming community are getting for their produce, to see that the water supplies to the agricultural areas are made to pay in the future. Some time ago the Minister reduced the charges, and last year the Goldfields Water Supply Department contributed about £10,000 to the agricultural districts. Now that the farming community have increased revenue coming in I think it only fair that this loss should be made good. In view of their present prosperous condition they should pay for the water they receive.

The Minister for Works: I agree with that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The State should not be called upon to make up a loss of £10,000 this year. It was £9,000 last year. A definite promise was made by the farmers that they would pay all the charges if the

water supply were carried to them. Bad seasons followed and the Minister dealt generously with them.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I would like the Minister to give us some information regarding the proposal to extend the pipe line through Belka and Totadjin to Bruce Rock. I think the Minister mentioned something about the cost a little while ago.

The Minister for Works: Speaking from memory, there were three schemes, and the highest estimate was about £130,000. The scheme was not within the realms of practical politics.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I understand it is the intention of the Government at present to take up the pipe line which is laid to Bulong at the end of the year or at the beginning of the new year. If that is so, I trust that the Government will not persevere with that proposal. The Minister probably knows that there are several pastoralists in that district and during recent years holdings have been taken up all round there. These holdings have been used for stock raising purposes. A considerable proportion of the goldfields meat supplies are drawn from round that district. The pipe line has been of great benefit to the district, and in fact is the only source of water supply there. The difficulty in the district and particularly in those parts not served by the goldfields water scheme is the question of water supply for the stock. One man—Mr. Creedon—lost nearly 1,000 head of stock during one of the recent dry seasons.

The Minister for Works: He had us all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know nothing of that. He is not served by the Bulong pipe line, but has conserved sufficient water for his own requirements. However, others in the district are served by the pipe line, and in consequence have taken no steps to conserve water for themselves. If the pipe line is taken up, they will be practically stranded.

The Minister for Works: They have had a year's notice.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One cannot in a year construct sufficient dams to conserve water necessary for all requirements.

Mr. Johnston: The mines may revive.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is another aspect. It is an old mining town, and one can never tell when it may revive. If there should be a revival, the department will be put to the expense of re-laying the torn-up pipe line. That has been illustrated at Mt. Monger during the present year. Moreover, those pipes have been down for a number of years, and it is questionable whether they will be found to be sufficiently preserved to be of use elsewhere. I hope the Minister will reconsider the decision.

The Minister for Works: I will give them all the sympathy I have.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am quite serious in my remarks, and I hope the Minister will sympathetically consider the matter.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I wish to say a few words in regard to the proposed removal of that pipe line. Representations have been made to me and others by members of the Primary Producers' Association, and the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) before leaving the Chamber just now asked me to speak in his behalf. The dams in that district are very unreliable. I am told that the pipe line is in a state of disrepair, and that the small pastoralists out there do most of the repairs themselves.

The Minister for Works: They do not.

Mr. JOHNSTON: They do a considerable amount of repairing at their own expense simply because they do not want the facility removed. The pipes are continually leaking and, I am convinced, will not stand removal. The pastoralists have some hundreds of cattle in the locality, and will be faced with ruin if the water supply is taken away. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) urged that the price of the water should be reduced; but I am authorised to say that if the existing pipes are allowed to remain the pastoralists will be prepared to continue to pay the current price.

The Minister for Works: And will they pay up all the arrears?

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is news to me that there are any arrears.

The Minister for Works: I do not know that there are.

Mr. JOHNSTON: To tear up this line would be poor faith on the part of the Government in the future, whether of the goldfields districts or of the pastoral areas. It will ruin a district that to-day is producing wealth, and will consign it back to the aboriginal and the dingo.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The members for Claremont (Mr. Duff) and for Avon (Mr. Harrison) had something to say about the Westonia water supply. I will go into the question of the price we are charging and see whether it is possible to do anything. Nobody knows better than the member for Claremont that two of the best mines there have petered out.

Mr. Duff: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I understand that two have shifted their machinery. The road board have applied for a special grant to put five miles of road in order, because the district is going down owing to the mines petering out.

Mr. Duff: Nobody knows better than I what is happening there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Either the road board have put forward a false case, or else the hon. member does not know the district. The road board said that two of the big mines had shifted their machinery and so cut up five miles of road. However, I will have inquiries made. As to the supply at Burracoppin, I will look into that question and, if possible, assist those people. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) is very much concerned about the supply of water to the small settlers on the

Eastern Goldfields. Let the small settlers on the goldfields to whom the hon. member referred put their case plainly before me and support it with facts, and I shall give it every consideration. Not only in that district, but in other districts, people who have wants are not always very particular as to how they urge their requests. I have received representations from small settlers on the Eastern goldfields which when inquired into, have been found to bear a very different aspect. My sympathies are always with the small man. Let the hon. member get the small settlers to put their case plainly and I will help him, but it is of no use bringing up a bolstered-up case, because I never move until I have exhausted every inquiry that I think ought to be made. Unless the Government are sympathetic, the hon. member proceeded to say, the settlers would be this, that, and the other. The Government are always sympathetic. Every Government must be sympathetic or its members would be unfit to occupy these chairs. When the turn of the leader of the Opposition comes to occupy this side of the House, he and his colleagues will also have to be sympathetic. Unless they are sympathetic and at the same time honest to the rest of the community, they will have no right to occupy these chairs. The hon. member also made some reference to the officers. The duty of the officers of the department is to place before the Minister the plain facts without any bias. It is no particular credit to the officers that they do so; they are simply carrying out their duty, and from my experience they have done their duty. I think the member for Boulder will say that when he was Minister, the officers then did their duty. In the Goldfields and other departments we have officers on whom a Minister can pin his faith.

Hon. P. Collier: They are a very good lot.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But it does not rest with the individual Minister and it certainly does not rest with the officers. If I had had the diagram here, I could have shown the hon. gentleman what it costs to convey the water to Kalgoorlie. I think it is 9s. 1½d. per thousand gallons, and about 7s. of that is swallowed up by interest and sinking fund. The law will not allow us to put that item aside. If it would I am sure that the Premier and his colleagues would be only too pleased to do so, in order to bring the cost of water down to a price which would simply return the cost of pumping the water, together with provision for replacements.

Mr. Lambert: That is the position which will have to obtain ultimately.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for North-East Fremantle stated that, as the farmers in the wheat areas had been doing fairly well during the last year or two, it should not be unreasonable to ask them to pay up their back debts and to keep

their accounts paid up. I quite agree with him.

Mr. Lambert: Is the member for Pingelly listening?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The members for Pingelly and Avon appear to be conferring with the object, no doubt, of advising their constituents to stump up as quickly as they can. There is far too much money in arrears for me to feel satisfied. When I last looked at the items of arrears in the outlying agricultural districts the amount was about £26,000.

Mr. Lambert: Shame!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not say shame. My instructions to the officers are to tell these farmers that if they do not pay up, I shall cut off the water, and I intend to do it. There is no question about that. If, as I believe, they are making money and good money and likely to make more money, it is only right to expect them to pay their debts. I am pleased that during the last few months we have received a larger proportion of payments from the agricultural districts than ever before, and I believe that before six months are over this outback indebtedness will be paid. It is my intention to get the money in. If they have the money with which to pay, and a lot of them have, because they are going in for various luxuries—

Mr. Duff: Motor cars.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One of the luxuries should be to pay their debts. The member for York—I think York is his district, though he might be termed the member for the whole State, the champion letter writer of Australia—spoke of places called Totadjin, Bruce Rock, and so forth. We must have three schemes and none of the schemes we could get out would have given anything like a decent return to the Government, and they had to be turned down. I think the amount was £130,000—I cannot say definitely from memory—but on the main principle that the schemes would not pay I am right. The leader of the Opposition spoke of removing the pipe line which is laid to Bulong. The decision to take up the pipe line was not hurriedly arrived at. We received a petition bearing 80 names. I had it investigated and, if the information given to me was correct—and I have no reason to doubt it—a lot of the names there were those of former residents. They might be land owners, but they did not reside in Bulong, and the only genuine names were those of four or five persons. The Government have no desire to injure any body of men and I shall have further inquiry made. If I am satisfied that the case is as represented by the hon. member, I shall reconsider the question.

Hon. P. Collier. The Minister will understand that the numbers there at the present might not warrant retaining it, but it is not only the numbers concerned which should be considered.

* **THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The hon. member is a great believer in majority rule. If for the purpose of supplying water to a large community I can take a pipe supplying only a few persons, I have a right to take it for the good of the greater number.

Hon. P. Collier: That is false reasoning.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Williams-Narrogin who got up as far as Bulong, spoke of the small pastoralist, and said the Government had little faith in the district.

Mr. Johnston: I said you would show little faith in the district if you removed that pipe line.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I quite understand the hon. member's desire to place this matter in the proper light. If he will only give the Government, including myself, credit for being not tyrannical or foolish, but for bringing to bear judgment and experience to do what we think best—

Mr. Johnston: I give you all that.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: And if he will display a little of the faith of Thomas Didimus, I think he will find that things will turn out all right.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Government Refrigerating Works, £1,449, Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, £3,359—agreed to.

Vote—Metropolitan Abattoirs and Sale-yards, £12,011:

Mr. DAVIES: I wish to direct the Minister's attention to the necessity for roofing the pens at the Midland Junction abattoirs. There are several disused wheat sheds near by, which might be purchased cheaply to supply the material. It has been stated on good authority that there were thousands of sheep in the pens sweltering in the heat of the summer and drenched during the winter, and that it is essential for the meat supply of the metropolitan area that these pens be roofed. I hope that the Minister will give this question sympathetic consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have taken a note of this and will bring it before the Minister for Agriculture. The number of cattle held in the abattoirs last year was 19,416, sheep 359,313, and pigs 7,844, a total head of stock of 386,573.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage, £97,213:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: When we were dealing with the Budget I made a statement that there appeared to be a profit of over £30,000 under this heading. Since then I have seen the balance sheet. According to this balance sheet my statement was incorrect. The Minister in reply pointed out that there was a considerable loss last year and not a profit. I did not make the statement wilfully, but made it because of the manner in which the Estimates were drawn up. If

hon. members will look at Item No. 11 they will see that interest and sinking fund on debentures, £33,510, is marked (b). This is so marked to draw members' attention to the foot note. We find that the interest and sinking fund, including provision made under special Acts, amount for approximately £76,000. I naturally formed the opinion that the £33,510 marked (b) was a portion of the £76,000. That is how the mistake occurred. The Estimates are to blame for my having placed the Minister in a wrong light in this direction. Although the balance sheet shows a loss of a little over £6,000 last year, the undertaking since it has been in operation shows a profit of something about £40,000 or £50,000. The Minister has not served the people of the metropolitan area because of this loss of £6,000 in the same manner as he has been serving the people in the country districts. Last year he reduced the price of water in the agricultural areas when we were losing thousands there. Notwithstanding that there is a very large credit to the undertaking as a whole he has increased the charge to the people in the metropolitan area 2d. in the pound. I hope the Minister will see that proper provision is made for an efficient water supply in the metropolitan area. We shall have trouble again this summer.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope that this summer will be the last occasion when we shall have to go short of water in the metropolitan area.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole circumstances surrounding the supply of water for the city are so important as to warrant a full discussion, but at this late hour, and with only a thin House, I do not feel justified in going very fully into the matter. The water supply for the city is far from satisfactory. The Minister himself will admit that. I do not blame the Government altogether for this position, but there is not an important city in Australia so badly served in the matter of water supply as Perth.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think that is correct.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I refer mainly to the quality of the water. I do not know that any capital city in Australia works on such a short supply during the summer months as Perth has had to do in recent years. This is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The capital of this State should not be put on short allowance for several months in the year.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will have to be done again this year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before we have actually entered upon the summer we are told that the water supply will be curtailed at an earlier period than was the case last year. We may have to look forward in Perth and the suburbs to another short supply. If we have a dry summer we may have to go without sufficient water for two

months. Apart from everything else, this is very unsatisfactory to people who have spent a lot of time and money on making gardens around their homes. Worse than that is the fact that for weeks at a time the people will have to put up with street dust because of the lack of water for the streets. We shall find that 60 per cent. of the water we do get will be bore water, and only 40 per cent. will come from the hills. The fact that the Government have recently put down a new bore to be operated during the coming summer is in itself proof that the supply of bore water will be increased. We all know that bore water is unsatisfactory, even if the supply is sufficient. Meantime the man in the street points out that Mundaring water is running to waste. The same may be said of the water in the streams adjacent to Perth.

The Minister for Works: The Melbourne engineer recommended that not a gallon should be taken from Mundaring for Perth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then that expert agrees with the policy which I laid down. While I was at the Water Supply Department, the departmental engineers went fully into the question of supplying Perth from Mundaring; and, as far as I remember, all their opinions were against utilising Mundaring water for the Perth supply. In the circumstances it is not competent for any Minister to say that such a proposal is feasible. There is the question of money, too, to be considered. But, even if money does not become cheaper, the question of making an early start on the procuring of a hills supply for Perth must be given prompt consideration. To complete that scheme will take about four years, a circumstance which should bring home to us the imperative necessity for the making of an early start; otherwise, each year as the summer comes round we shall have to go without that supply of water which is essential to the comfort and convenience of the people. Further, there is the question of the quality of bore water. Some little time ago the Premier told us that he had been offered a million from London, and that he had refused it as he did not want it. I suggest he wants some of it for a water supply for Perth. The charges for water have been increased lately.

The Minister for Works: The water rate has been increased from 10d. to 1s. in the pound.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Has the storm water rate been increased?

The Minister for Works: It cannot be increased, as we are up to the limit.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am glad to hear that, but I wish the limit were lower. I look upon the storm water rate, in so far as it affects some parts of the metropolitan area, as rank robbery. It is robbery in the district where I reside. There we have to pay 5d. in the pound storm water rate, and get no benefit whatever from it. In other

parts of the metropolitan area, of course, the residents do benefit from the payment of the storm water rate, since those parts are furnished with storm water drains. As regards the water supply, the quantity of the supply decreases and its quality becomes inferior while the rate keeps mounting. May we hope that within a reasonable time a start will be made towards obtaining an adequate supply of fresh water for Perth from the hills?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The footnote which misled the member for North-East Fremantle should have been more explicit. As regards water supply, undoubtedly restrictions on the use of water will have to be imposed during this summer, and in my opinion during next summer also. The only means of quickly augmenting the supply at our disposal has been and is the putting down of additional bores. In the case of the Osborne Park bore, we expected to have to go down to a depth of 1,500 or 1,600 feet; but I am pleased to state that the bore is now down about 700 feet and is yielding at that depth a supply of water equal to three-quarters of a million gallons per day—and water of a quality which leaves nothing to be desired.

Hon. P. Collier: As bore water goes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. It is as good water as can be got from Mundaring weir.

Hon. P. Collier: How long will it last?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: How can I tell? This bore water is practically cool, while as a rule bore water is hot. With the money left unexpended from this bore, I have decided to put down another bore in the vicinity, in the hope of catching what the engineers believe we shall catch, another supply of artesian water.

Hon. P. Collier: I am very sorry to hear it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What are we to do? We cannot get water by any other means. Are we to refrain from putting down bores and let the people go short of water?

Hon. P. Collier: So long as you get enough water from bores, you will not tackle the other scheme.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Let the hon. member apply himself to the practical question. As far as the water supply from the hills is concerned—

Hon. P. Collier: If you believed in that, why did you run away from public criticism? You endorsed the Nicholson-road scheme and then ran away from it because the public criticised you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member will admit that—

Hon. P. Collier: You are an authority on water supply. You changed your mind very quickly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If you are going to talk that way, you are simply insulting. I will not reply.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If you are going to talk that way, I will have something to say. I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	8
Noes	15

Majority against	..	7
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AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Troy
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Collier	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)
Mr. Munsie	

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Draper	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Duff	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Foley	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Hickmott	(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I was trying to explain what the Government have done regarding the water supply for the metropolitan area. The importance and seriousness of the position are admitted. The Government do not attempt to minimise it but we have to look at the situation from a practical point of view in order to see what is the best to be done. A scheme was put forward by Mr. Lawson, the engineer for the metropolitan water supply, which was merely carrying out a scheme proposed 30 years ago by a syndicate with which I was connected. I may therefore claim to know something about this matter. Putting that aspect aside, however, I will state that the scheme was put forward by Mr. Lawson and the Government were prepared to go on with it. The scheme included the establishment of a weir at Nicholson-road. The people in the metropolitan area and in the district affected by this portion of the scheme, agitated against the proposal. The mayor of Perth, the city council and other bodies urged that the matter should be reconsidered by the Government. This was done and it was decided to call in an expert from one of the other States to go into the whole scheme and report upon it. That investigation was carried out, and I think it was the right action to take in calling in a man of standing in the profession to investigate the whole question apart altogether from local prejudices and local bias. The result is that on the Table of the House lie the scheme and report of Mr. Ritchie of the Metropolitan Board of Works in Melbourne. Mr. Ritchie unhesitatingly turned down the Nicholson-road scheme showing that the proposition made by the local officer and not endorsed by the people here, should not be gone on with. That report has been, and

is still in the hands of the officers of the department in order that it may be thoroughly considered. The report contemplates the expenditure of probably a million and a half of money, and the Committee will readily appreciate the fact that in the circumstances the report should be thoroughly examined in all its aspects before steps are taken to carry out the scheme in any form. Even if we went on with that scheme now—naturally there is no doubt that we shall go on with the scheme—we could not get the water from the hills to the people in the metropolis within three years. It could not be done sooner. It would take time to get the material for the mains and lay them and construct the reservoirs which are involved in the scheme. I do not want the Committee to think that in referring to a period such as three years, we are trying in any way to have the time extended. If I remain in my present office to carry out the work, the whole of my efforts will be directed to getting the water down as quickly as possible from the hills. I am aware that what the leader of the Opposition says regarding the water from the bores is largely correct, and also that he has to pay 5d. in the pound for storm water rates. Although he has to pay that amount, he is not so badly off as I am. I had to spend between £600 and £700 to get a water supply at my home and yet I have to pay the water rate as well, and the only direction in which I can use that water is for sanitary purposes. I cannot use it on my flower gardens or lawns as it would kill the plants. We all have to pay rates in proportion to our holdings, probably in inverse ratio to the benefit we receive. For instance, I believe the rates payable on the Palace Hotel run to about £500 per annum and on the A.M.P. Buildings to between £600 and £700 per annum. Would anybody suggest that the water used on those premises is worth that much? Of course not. But the owners of those places have to bear their share of the scheme, otherwise the small man could not get water at all.

Hon. P. Collier drew attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung, quorum formed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Again we shall have to place restrictions on the use of water. At Pickering Brook we are building a service reservoir which will supply a considerable portion of Victoria Park without the water having to come to Perth first and then return. It is not expected to have that reservoir sufficiently advanced to be of much practical use this summer, but it will be of use next winter and thereafter. At Fremantle we are building the Richmond reservoir, which will be used for supplying the ships with water from the hills, and improving the supply in Fremantle. That reservoir will be of some use before the summer is over. It has a capacity of about a million gallons and it will be filling during the hours of night. A bore has been placed at Osborne Park where at a depth of about 700 feet we have secured a supply equal to three-quarters

of a million gallons per day. The quality of the water is reported to be equal to that at Mundaring. Having previously made provision to carry this bore to a depth of about 1,700 feet, I have decided to use the balance of the funds to put down a second bore in the vicinity, where the engineers are of opinion we shall at a shallow depth strike another artesian basin. If we can get a valuable supply in that way, we shall be able to add to the available supplies this summer from $1\frac{1}{4}$ million to $1\frac{1}{2}$ million gallons per day. In connection with the new bore, we are now laying down machinery for pumping the water to the main, through which it can be distributed to the city. We already had the pumps required, so we had only to purchase a boiler, in addition to which there is the money necessary for the establishing of the plant. The Engineer-in-Chief and Mr. Lawson have gone into the matter, and those two gentlemen have given me the information which I have placed before the Committee. Every effort will be made to render the unavoidable restrictions on the use of water as little irksome as possible. It has been suggested that we should alter the hours set apart last summer for the use of water. That question is receiving consideration. Every effort will be made to suit the convenience of those who pay for the water. It must be clearly recognised that water for domestic purposes shall take precedence over water for lawns and gardens. The supply of water for domestic purposes and human necessity must have first consideration. Regarding the increased charges, we are at the limit with regard to storm water and sewerage rates, and we are at the limit with regard to the rate for water. It was 10d. and we raised it to 1s. We have had to meet the increased expenditure which has followed the development of the city and the laying on of numerous services. We have quite a number of applications for the laying down of small mains to supply a few houses, and it is considered a right policy that a certain income should be shown. In some instances, where we had faith that the growth of a district would be large, we have proceeded somewhat in advance of immediate requirements in laying down the mains. The wages alone for employees in the metropolitan area are very much higher than they were a year ago. We recently added 2s. 4d. a day to their pay, and when members think of the great number of men employed, they will realise that this increase makes a big difference. In the previous year we raised their wages from 9s. 7d. to 12s. a day, and now they have gone up to 14s. 4d. If these wages demands have to be met, as undoubtedly they have, the money can only be made good by drawing upon those who benefit as the result of the labour which these men provide. It is shown that, at the time we compiled our Estimates, we were aware of the probability of a further advance being granted to these employees, but we were unable to make allowance for it in our Estimates, because we had no data

upon which to go. So long as the wages bills grow, our expenses must naturally grow. When the wages bills will cease to grow, goodness only knows. I am of opinion that the labourer who is to-day receiving 14s. 4d. is not so well off as was the labourer years ago on 8s. a day. Of course we cannot revert to the conditions that obtained when the wages ruling were 8s. a day. We have to consider the wages paid in relation to the cost of living for a man and his family. We all know that the purchasing power of the sovereign is nothing like so great as it was a few years ago, and if we have to increase wages to keep pace with these disabilities, those who have the benefits of the water and sewerage schemes must pay. I have not the slightest doubt that the Government who are in power next session will have to seek authority to raise the rating in the city of Perth and its suburbs.

Mr. Smith: When will you complete the metropolitan sewerage system?

[Mr. Mumsie took the Chair.]

Hon P. COLLIER: I move—

That progress be reported.

The Minister for Mines: We ought to get through these Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: If we had received reasonable civility, we would have got through.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	5
Nocs	..	..	..	..	14
					—
Majority against	..	..	..	..	9
					—

AYES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Collier	Mr. Smith
Mr. Troy	(Teller.)

NOCES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Draper	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Duff	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Foley	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Hardwick
	(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I regret that at this late hour we are forced to continue the discussion of the Estimates for this department. I was anxious that progress should be reported in order to afford metropolitan members, who are so vitally concerned in the water supply of the city, an opportunity to be present and to take part in the discussion. With the exception of the member for North Perth, no member representing a metropolitan constituency is present.

Mr. Smith: The Attorney General and the member for East Perth are here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not surprised at the absence of members, because the lateness of the hour is a reasonable explanation of their absence. If it is not considered to be out of order, I would remind the Minister that ever since the session opened, I have assisted the Government to push on with the business. I have met the Premier on every possible occasion by sitting late or otherwise as occasion demanded, and generally I have worked in harmony with him to assist to get through the business of the session as expeditiously as possible. It during the absence of the Premier we are not to be allowed to adjourn at the usual hour, and business is to be bludgeoned through, I shall have to reconsider my attitude. If there is going to be a trial of endurance I can promise the Minister for Works that he will not make so much progress next week or the week after as has been done hitherto. We are not going to be bludgeoned into sitting here at all hours.

The Minister for Works: Why should there be any necessity to threaten?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not a threat. If I am not to receive any consideration on the rare occasions when I ask for it I am not going to be so indulgent as to assist the Government every night to put their business through. I hope we shall now be able exhaustively to examine the position of the water supply before we adjourn, and possibly later in the sitting metropolitan members will have resumed their seats and will be able to join in the debate. Unfortunately, we have not yet received the report of the Water Supply Department. It is true a type-written copy was laid on the Table.

The Minister for Works: This is all I have on the subject. It has been on the Table for a week.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shall be glad to have the use of the Minister's copy, but as it is rather difficult to grasp the contents of such a document while one is making a speech I shall have to postpone the matter for the time being and peruse the report more at my leisure.

Progress reported.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

House adjourned at 11.47 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 16th November, 1920.

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

QUESTION—MINING, ELECTION OF WORKMEN'S INSPECTORS.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Minister for Education: 1, (a) Do the regulations framed under the Mines Regulation Act Amendment Act, 1915, setting out the method of election of workmen's inspectors provide that a voter, when exercising a vote, shall record a full preference for the whole of the candidates shown on the ballot paper? (b) If not, what are the reasons for departing from the statutory method of voting at a Parliamentary election? 2, Who framed the poster relating to the recent election of workmen's inspectors in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts, which states, *inter alia*: "The voter shall mark the papers by putting the numbers 1, 2, and 3, and so on, opposite the names of the candidates in the order of preference," and "Voters may vote for any number of the names on the paper provided they are marked in the order of preference"? 3, Is the Minister aware that the application of the words "shall" and "may" on the poster caused much confusion amongst voters as to whether or not it was necessary to exercise a full preference in respect of all candidates whose names appeared on the ballot paper? 4, Is the Minister aware that instructions were given to deputy returning officers that unless a voter exercised a full preference his ballot paper would be declared informal, and that such instructions were promulgated amongst voters? 5, Is the Minister aware that (a) the two retiring inspectors—who were both candidates—and their supporters actively canvassed voters and advised that it was not necessary to exercise a full preference vote, and that (b) the returning officer disallowed no ballot paper by reason merely that the voter had failed to exercise a full preference? 6, By what system or process of counting did the returning officer ascertain the result of the ballot? 7, Will the Minister lay upon the Table of the House all papers and counting sheets used by the returning officer which record the distributions of all formal first preference votes, and which record the various transfers of the remaining preferences?