

present war would have been impossible. That is the spirit of the working classes, at any rate. The idea of the working classes was voiced to some extent by a small band in Berlin when war was declared between France and Germany in 1870. That band sent the following message to their French comrades: "We are the enemies of all war. Solemnly we promise that neither the sound of the trumpet, nor the roar of the cannon, neither victory nor defeat, will swerve us from our common purpose, the union of the toilers of all countries." Whilst we, as representatives of the workers, now that this great struggle is upon us, recognise that we have to go shoulder to shoulder, and whilst we are prepared to bear our share of the brunt of the fighting, nevertheless we contend that there is a better and brighter future, which will arise when the working classes get into power in a democratic Germany of the future. I thank hon. members very much for their kind attention.

On motion by Mr. Heitmann debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.46 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 10th August, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Statement by the Auditor General respecting the auditing of trading concerns.

By the Attorney General: Statutes 17 and 18 of the University of Western Australia.

By the Minister for Works: Regulations 1-6 under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915.

By Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ended 30th June, 1914.

NOTICE OF QUESTION—BLACKBOY HILL CAMP.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): I give notice that to-morrow I shall ask the Premier: Will he make inquiries from the Commonwealth Government as to: 1. Whether it is a fact that at Blackboy Hill Camp, where there are about 3,000 men now in camp, only three water taps are available for the use of the men and for washing up purposes? 2. Whether it is a fact that at the camp there are seven shower baths, which are not available for the men between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.? 3. Whether it is not in the interests of the volunteer movement that better sanitary arrangements be immediately installed? 4. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, will the Premier use his influence to have more suitable arrangements made?

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe): I have nothing whatever to do with it. There is a member for the district in the House of Representatives, and there are six Senators representing the State. If the hon. member wires to one of them he can get the information; I cannot give it to him.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, JUTE IMPORTATION.

Mr. HARRISON: asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1. Is it considered by his department to be in the best interests of agricultural development that the present methods of selling jutes at the value of contents contained therein should be con-

tinned? 2. What was the estimated loss to the industry, taking the returns for the 1913-14 harvest, under present methods in respect to jutes for (a) wheat exported, with bags, say, at 7s. per dozen, and wheat at 3s. per bushel on the farm as mean values; (b) wheat used and milled in the State taking similar values; (c) chaff at £3 10s. per ton on the farm and jutes at 6s. per dozen, with an average of 2S bags to the ton?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: 1. Yes, whilst our methods of handling certain farm products require jutes to hold them before they can be marketed. 2. (a) It is estimated that the amount of wheat, exported as wheat, amounted to 7,286,435 bushels, requiring, say, 2,420,000 sacks. The amount paid by the producers for bags at 7s. per dozen would be £70,583: the amount received by the producers in exchange for these bags would be £13,612, leaving a difference of £56,971. (b) It is estimated that the total amount of flour milled for export and local consumption amounted to 61,810 tons, equivalent to 3,090,500 bushels, requiring, say, 1,030,000 sacks. The amount paid by the producers for bags to hold this wheat at 7s. per dozen would be £30,041: with wheat at 3s. a bushel they would receive £5,793, leaving a difference of £24,248. (c) It is estimated that the average chaff production of the State is about 220,000 tons per year. Assuming that 80,000 tons would be required for producers' own consumption, 140,000 tons would be sold. Bags to hold this would cost £98,000. With chaff at £3 10s. a ton the supplier would receive 7,656, leaving a difference of £90,344. Whilst jutes are necessary to market the products which are contained in them, the differences enumerated cannot be considered as loss to the producers, but rather as portion of the cost of production.

QUESTION—RAILWAY TRADERS' MONEY, INVESTMENT.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that money

held by the Railway Department from traders dealing with them as a ledger account for the payment of freight is being invested in the Commonwealth Bank, and bearing interest at 3 per cent.? 2, If so, can he inform me why this money is not invested in the Government Savings Bank, where interest at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is given?

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

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE, SEASON'S CROP.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Lands: Will he cause a definite statement to be issued, that farmers can cut their crop for wheat or hay, according as circumstances fit in best from the point of view of the most profitable result, under the Industries Assistance Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Lands) replied: It is recognised that the farmer must be the best judge as to whether his crop is suitable for stripping or cutting for hay, and settlers will, as far as possible, be allowed to use their own judgment; but the Board's approval must be obtained before any sale is completed.

QUESTION—HARVEST AND THE RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (without notice) asked the Premier: Is adequate provision being made by the Railway Department to cope with the expected record crop?

The PREMIER replied: The hon. member would notice by the Press that some time ago we arranged to revert to the 48 hours in a section of the workshops, in order to enable certain repairs, etc., to be put in hand and brought up to date prior to the commencement of the transportation of the harvest. The Commissioner of Railways is taking all possible steps to handle the harvest as quickly and economically as possible, but this is, to some extent, dependent upon financial considerations. While everything possible is being and will be done in

this direction, at the same time it should not be expected, under existing conditions, in view of the possible difficulty in handling the harvest at the seaboard, to expect the Railway Department to shift it as expeditiously as in 1913. The Commissioner does not anticipate any difficulty in giving reasonable despatch to all shipping, and in keeping the mills going.

BILLS (+)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Weights and Measures.
- 2, Bread Act Amendment.
- 3, Mine Workers' Relief Fund.

Introduced by Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister).

- 4, Enemy Contracts Annulment. Introduced by the Attorney General.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the 5th August.

Mr. HEITMANN (Geraldton) [4.45]: It is not my intention to join the band of mutual admirers, that mutual admiration society which has sprung up in the Chamber during the last few days. Nor do I intend to follow the accepted policy of patting each other on the back and telling each other what good fellows we all are. In spite of the war, the bad times, and the worse times promised, I do not think it is altogether necessary for members of either side to refrain from offering any fair criticism which they may feel called upon to make. A lot has been said in regard to party politics, and for some reason or other this subject has been directly connected with that of patriotism. Yet, looking over the measures referred to in His Excellency's Speech, I can conceive of nothing which should prevent any member from taking part in a most animated debate on any of those measures, and yet subscribe to the principle of patriotism. The word "patriotism" has been used so much of late that it has almost become an abstract term. There are many conceptions of patriotism. Some men and women have such love for their country that they are

prepared to give up everything to assist her in the present war. The youth of our country are prepared to make immense sacrifices—apart altogether from the probability of their losing their lives—in order that they may fight for the Empire. Then we have another view of patriotism: We hear of wealthy men who, unable to go to the front themselves, urge others to make the sacrifice. I have read of an individual who, referring to the workers as slackers, declared they should go to the front. Again, we have a type of patriot much in evidence throughout history, those men always ready to make money out of the misfortunes of their country. According to an evening paper, the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) the other night "threw mud" at the army contractors. The army contractor also appears in history, and seems to be in very bad odour indeed. The newspaper I refer to took the member for Forrest to task for daring to throw mud at the army contractor. I should be sorry indeed to think the time would ever come when we shall look with respect to the type of patriot to be found among those of the army contractors who endeavour to make extra dividends by fraud in war time. It does not say much for the Press of Western Australia that, having a knowledge that certain big firms in this State and other parts of the Commonwealth were endeavouring to defraud the Defence Department, it adopted a policy of silence, or at least said very little indeed about the matter. What shall be said of the type of patriot who, sending away our soldiers with bad boots, bad clothes, and bad material generally, is to be found the next night on a public platform, waving a flag and singing "God Save the King"? There is only one just way of dealing with an individual of that type. It is a pity we have not in authority men of the calibre of the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, who, we are told, called into his office certain army contractors and formally notified them that if he did not get a square deal from them they would be hanged. There is no greater enemy than

the man who would send our soldiers away ill-equipped, while he makes huge profits by fraud. A squad of men with loaded rifles presents the best possible means of dealing with patriots of that description. Frequent reference has been made to the system of party politics. I see many ill effects of the party system, and were it in my power I would sweep away the system. If we could get some other system which would enable every member to express his views fully and freely upon the various measures introduced it would be better for the individual members, better for the Government, and decidedly better for the people.

Member: Does not that happen now?

Mr. HEITMANN: Every member knows it does not. It is well known to every member of each party that at times the individual has to submit to the majority of his party. The greatest defect of the system is that it does not give the individual member an opportunity for that development which is expected of every man who enters public life. I am not blaming anyone for it, because I think the blame cannot be properly fixed. Everyone knows that under the party system we are, to a great extent, governed by the Executive. That is necessary in respect to administration, but the effect is not always confined to administration. If the Government be powerful enough it is possible for the Executive to be in control of the Legislature. There are many occasions when independent thought, if given full play, would benefit both the country and the individual. It is the same with both parties. The member for Gascoyne shakes his head, but he is just as much subject to majority rule in his party as is any member of any other party.

Mr. Gilchrist: They have not tried to exercise any influence over me so far.

Mr. HEITMANN: But your party is so insignificantly small, and their power as a body is so limited, that it is hardly worth their while trying to exercise power over an individual member. If we had a different system in politics the individuality of private members would

develop, the legislation would be better, and the people generally would benefit greatly by the change.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think the Initiative and Referendum would remove the difficulties?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: What about elective Ministries?

Mr. HEITMANN: If we have elective Ministries we will require quite a number of other things in connection therewith. On the question of finances, there is probably a difference of opinion as to our actual condition. It has been said that we are in a serious position, and even the Premier has asked us to recognise that the next few months will prove a serious, not to say a critical, period. After all, that period will be experienced in all the States of Australia, and probably in other countries as well. Unfortunately, it has been the custom in Australia to live to a great extent upon loan funds, and as we are now faced with a probability of getting no loan funds at all for a time, it seems as though we are going to have a bad head after the financial drunk. By the expenditure of loan funds we create what might be termed a fictitious prosperity, but so long as we develop the State proportionately with the amount we spend, perhaps there is no great danger in normal times. However, in a State like Western Australia, where we have spent so much money on work which will certainly be reproductive, but not for some years to come, the tightening of the loan funds is likely to be felt very keenly. Perhaps, after all, it will do us good, because if by inducing the people to economise in every direction we can, if only for 12 months, live within our revenue, it will be beneficial to the country in the future. I would repeat to the agricultural members that during the last 12 months, at all events, most of our loan funds have been expended with a view to assisting the agricultural industry. Members of the Country party and other members representing farming districts have acknowledged in the House what has been done by the Government for the industry represented by them.

Mr. Taylor: Not so. One said that only now have they direct representation.

Mr. HEITMANN: In any case it cannot be denied that the Government have dealt with the agricultural industry from a business standpoint. Twelve months ago, or a little less, the Government were faced with the possibility of probably a majority of the farmers being turned adrift unless they received more than ordinary assistance, and the Government rightly, in my opinion, said, "We must keep these people on their farms; they must live, and it is better to keep them on the land developing their holdings than to have them doing nothing in and around the City."

Mr. Thomson: Quite right.

Mr. HEITMANN: There have been occasions when members of the Country party have not given due credit to the Government for what they have done. I have travelled through some of the farming areas, and the slightest mistake on the part of the Industries Assistance Board—a single case of a man not getting justice—has been sufficient to overcloud everything else done by the Government.

Mr. Cunningham: Have not they made mistakes?

Mr. HEITMANN: Any sane man will admit that mistakes have been made and that vexatious delays have occurred, but any sane man must also admit that in such a department, organised rapidly and undertaking the work immediately, it would have been extraordinary if mistakes had not been made. I read in the Press that the leader of the Country party, with fire in his eye, exclaimed—"Wait until Parliament meets and you will see what will happen."

Mr. Taylor: He has had a twinge of the gout since then.

The Premier: He was merely warning the Liberals not to take any drastic action.

Mr. HEITMANN: In his speech last week the hon. member's tone was very different, and I have no hesitation in saying that if he speaks his mind, he will agree that never before has the agricultural industry received greater assistance.

or even the same consideration as during the past year or two.

Mr. Willmott: Thank God we have never needed it before!

Mr. HEITMANN: The hon. member infers that considerably more might have been done during the bad times recently.

Mr. Willmott: No; fortunately for Western Australia, the circumstances have never arisen before.

Mr. HEITMANN: I agree with the hon. member, but when we consider that the settlers stricken with the drought have been supplied with stores, horse-feed, superphosphates, horses, in some cases machinery, and seed wheat, it must be recognised that no Government could have done more than the present Government have done. I admit that many mistakes have been made; there have been many disappointments, and at times I have felt that the office work of the board merited strong criticism, but on more mature consideration I have realised that the board were up against a fairly difficult problem. Perhaps the time is not opportune to enter upon the question of the development of our agricultural industries, but I cannot help remarking upon the efforts made in a certain part of the State. Recently I paid a visit to a place, which was at one time held up as the coming spot of Western Australia for potato growing and dairying, that is, the Denmark district, and I confess no credit is due to the gentleman who initiated what has been done there. In my opinion the time will come when the great proportion of the population will be settled in that part of the country which is now covered by heavy timber. It is easy to compute the population which the wheat belt will maintain, but the other thickly populated districts will in future be found in this part of the State. Notwithstanding this, I know of no instance of poorer efforts having been made to open up new branches of the rural industry, such as butter making, than have been made in the Denmark district. The call on the individual in that locality is altogether too great. He has been dropped there and told it was

possible to do this and that; and he has been allowed to remain there and has received very little consideration from past Governments. Systematic effort is necessary to open up this part of the State because it must become one of the most important. I intend to take the risk of being called a parish-pump politician. Until recently I have always subscribed to the policy that a district, no matter where it is situated, should receive its due and nothing more or less; politics should not enter into the question at all. I do not say that politics have entered into the question as regards the district I have in mind, that is, the Victoria district. For the first time, at any rate for a considerable period, I intend to plead for greater consideration for this district which includes the town I represent. I have always held the opinion that amongst a majority of members of Parliament, there has been a feeling that Geraldton is so far distant from the capital as to be regarded almost as a foreign place. Very rarely have we heard of Ministers of the Crown, other than the Colonial Secretary, who resided there, visiting the district, and as little prominence as possible seems to have been given to what it can produce and is producing at the present time. Victoria district includes, I suppose, one-fifth of the wheat growing country of the State, and it has to its credit, I am pleased to relate, the highest average by far of the wheat growing districts of Western Australia. In the sub-district of Geraldton, the return in 1913-14 was 16.9 bushels per acre, and during that season the average for the whole of the district, which includes the Victoria Plains, was 15.5 bushels per acre. When the farmers reach the stage of employing the most approved methods of cultivation, this district should yield an average of 20 bushels to the acre. In 1913-14 the total production was $2\frac{1}{2}$ million bushels out of 13 million odd bushels produced in the whole of the State. In that season there was exported from Geraldton just on 400,000 bags of wheat, £170,000 worth of wool and about £7,000 worth of flour. I have an object in mentioning

these matters, which is to ask Parliament and the Government as was done by two of my predecessors in this Chamber, to recognise the importance of Geraldton and give it the credit which that importance demands. The facilities for shipping at this port are quite obsolete. Some £50,000 or £60,000 has been spent on the jetty at Geraldton and in the year 1914 shipping was so congested, for a brief period I admit, that it was impossible to give the vessels reasonable despatch. In view of the increased area under crop this season and the wonderfully good prospects ahead, it is possible that instead of 400,000 bags of wheat there will be shipped from Geraldton three-quarters of a million bags of wheat. What is to be done? When congestion resulted during a season in which we shipped 400,000 bags of wheat, how do the Government intend to meet the greater demands expected from the probable increased yield of the present season? I wish to refer to the action of the Minister in charge of harbours and rivers. When a few months ago it was found impossible to embark on the big scheme of harbour improvement adopted by the Government—Geraldton's is almost entirely an artificial harbour—owing to the state of the finances, I readily accepted the position. Later on I asked that everything possible should be done in order that when the time came and the money was available there should be no delay in consequence of the usual preliminary work. I was informed that certain work was to be carried out in Geraldton and that steps were to be taken to widen the existing jetty. Though the Minister was fairly decided on the matter and realised the necessity for steps being taken to cope with the requirements of the present season and the interval before adequate facilities could be provided, I learn now that for some extraordinary reason which I cannot fathom, nothing is to be done. This matter has gone on from week to week and evidently will go on from month to month, and it appears to me that the Minister shares the general feeling of members that Geraldton does not come

within purview when the requirements of the State are being considered.

The Minister for Works: You know that is not true.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. the Minister must withdraw.

The Minister for Works: I withdraw. The hon. member knows it is not correct.

Mr. HEITMANN: I did not say it is intentional.

The Minister for Works: Whether you say it is intentional or otherwise, it is not correct.

Mr. HEITMANN: If the Minister does not share that feeling, why is not this work being proceeded with at present?

The Minister for Works: Do not you know?

Mr. HEITMANN: I know what I have been told by the Minister.

The Minister for Works: And that is correct.

Mr. HEITMANN: I cannot get away from the fact, and the Minister cannot either, that he voluntarily and unsolicited by me, informed me that it was necessary something should be done at Geraldton to cope with the shipping requirements. If this is so, why has not something been done? That is what we want to know. I want to again impress upon Ministers that the Victoria district has a wonderful future before it. The Geraldton harbour will deal with all its produce from a distance of 150 to 160 miles down the Wongan Hills railway. It will also deal with the produce from over 150 miles down the Midland Railway. If we are going to develop this State properly it is only due to it that this port at Geraldton should have those conveniences which the Minister himself must know are absolutely necessary. I want to deal for a moment with the efforts which have been made during the last few months by the Government—formed of the party of which I am a member—to economise. In his statement to the House the other night the Premier invited assistance. What he actually said was "We ask assistance and advice." I am going to accept that invitation, and deal from a constructive standpoint with what has

been done in regard to economising in the Civil Service of the State. What I am going to say is my own opinion entirely. In the first place we decided, after the Legislative Council refused to pass our Taxation measures, that the Government would be forced to economise in the Civil Service. It is a pity, and I suppose every member of the Chamber will admit it, that this measure of taxation, which was introduced in and passed by this Chamber, was not made law. It would have been much fairer, and a far more equitable system than that which the Government were forced to adopt. First of all, the Government said to the railway men that they were obliged to reduce them to 44 hours a week. Later on this system was applied to the whole of the Civil Service. The reason for the reduction of hours is found in a statement of the leader of the Government that he was making it a rule not to reduce wages. I question very much, however, whether wages have been reduced or not. Putting aside for a moment the question of whether this scheme could be interpreted as a reduction of wages or not, I think that the Attorney General will agree with me that the workers in this State have been reduced four hours a week. That being so I do not see how they can regard this as anything else but a reduction in wages, or at all events a reduction in their income. I agree that it is a good rule—and it is a rule which has been adopted by this Government as far as possible—that wages should not be reduced. There are times, however, when it is beneficial not to put into operation even the best rule, and I think this is one of those cases. There is a principle of the party of which I am a member, and to whose platform I have subscribed, which we have long preached; that is that we should tax the individual according to his ability to pay. I do think that of these two rules or principles to which I have referred, the one governing perhaps a fair proportion of the State, and the other (that of taxation) the whole of the State, the latter for the time being is the most important.

It is a matter of impossibility, as of course the Minister knows and we all know, to apply the principle of taxation according to ability to pay, in the same breath as we apply the system of a reduction of hours. I want to plead on behalf of those who are responsible for my being here, and to ask the House where the justice, the equity, and the good sense are of saying to the worker receiving 9s. a day, "We shall take from you the value of four hours per week," and say exactly the same thing to the man who is earning £1,500 or £2,000 a year. There is no fair proportion in this, as I am sure the Attorney General himself recognises. I am prepared to admit at once that the position was a difficult one. I will also admit that, whatever blame or credit is carried along with this action of the Government, I share in it in just the same way as any other member of the party. We have not even the satisfaction of knowing that we have not reduced wages, although the principle is advocated by the Premier, his colleagues, and the entire party. It must be apparent to any man, particularly some members of the Civil Service, that they have been reduced, but that their hours are often just the same and in many cases considerably longer than before. In my own district, there are heads of branches of departments who find it impossible to give less time to the State than they were previously called upon to give. There are Police Stations throughout the country at which men have to be on duty the whole time. There are the men in charge of one-man railway stations throughout the State, who have to work as long a time as ever. There are also our medical officers who are in much the same position. These men could not by the greatest stretch of imagination say that they had their four hours off weekly. They could not take the hours off even if they wanted to.

The Minister for Works: There are very few of the salaried men in that position.

Mr. HEITMANN: I will admit that. I was speaking at a public meeting one night when I was brought up sharply by

a medical officer who was amongst the audience. This gentleman stated that while I might say that the rate of pay was not reduced, he himself was receiving one or two pounds per month less and yet was working the same time—as indeed he was obliged to do. Some officers in this State, who have been in the Service for a considerable time, have been working long periods of overtime. I have been told—I cannot vouch for it—that in the Seed Wheat Board office, for instance, men have been called back night after night to work up till 10 o'clock, and then are forced to take the four hours off on Saturday morning. In some of the branches of the Railway Department at Midland Junction wherever there was work to be found, the men have been allowed to continue that work. This does not appeal to me as being equitable. It is not right that one man in a particular department who finds plenty of work shall receive full benefits and full pay, and that another man, who happens for the time being to be in another branch of the service where work is slack, shall be reduced. In my own district owing to the washaways it was a matter of impossibility to observe the rule of a 44 hours week. This brings me to another point. Some of the drivers and guards and other railway servants have earned more, I suppose, during the last six or seven months than they have ever earned in their lives before, owing to the work involved through the washaways. I am told that one man earning 9s. a day was able to make £70 for six weeks' work. I am told also, that an engineer-in-charge picked up in one month £20 for away-from-home allowances. Is it not possible for us to make that individual and others like him pay according to his earnings? I believe it would be better even at this late date for the Government to say "Times are bad; we cannot, we find, employ the whole of the members of the Civil Service at the ordinary rate: you partake of the good times of the State, and we would have this tax distributed over the whole of the people if possible." That is not possible. It is

a bad policy from every standpoint to have men idle, particularly in regard to developmental work, and I think we should have the right to say "You should continue to work full time, but we are forced, not to reduce the rates of pay, but to ask you to return to the Treasury a small percentage of what you receive." We could then make a graduated scale. Even the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) will, I think, subscribe to that plank which says that a man should pay according to his ability to pay.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I cannot subscribe to the plank by which one section of the workers shall pay and another not.

Mr. HEITMANN: We should be able under that rule—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I will not subscribe to a plank for a reduction of wages either.

Mr. HEITMANN: There is much to be said on both sides as to whether this is actually a reduction in wages or not. The fact remains that men in this State earning 9s. a day are reduced in the same proportion as men earning £1,500 a year.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): No, they are not.

Mr. HEITMANN: In proportion they are.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): In proportion, yes.

Mr. HEITMANN: Can the hon. member or anyone else uphold the system which says that we should take from the 9s. per day man the same proportion of his salary as we take from the man who perhaps, like the Commissioner for Railways, is getting £2,000 a year? It appeals to me that, while we say we will not reduce wages, we are at the same time reducing a man's income. The scheme I have suggested would not bear a greater appearance of reduction of rates of pay than the scheme which is at present in vogue. Previous to the instruction being issued by the Government, quite a number of our civil servants voluntarily subscribed to the fund; but subscription was on a graduated scale, and the man with £150 a year was not expected to pay at

the same rate as the man on a higher salary. I do think that, while there is a possibility of a certain section of the community saying that we have reduced wages, there is a bigger possibility of the same section expressing anything but appreciation in regard to our granting them the four hours off.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They would not express appreciation of any action.

Mr. HEITMANN: If that is the attitude of the Honorary Minister, why stick to the idea of not reducing wages? The Honorary Minister infers that he is regardless of what is said. He has often expressed himself to that effect. But why, in that case, stick to the idea when we know that we are not giving the bottom dog a fair deal?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Turn it up.

Mr. HEITMANN: The Honorary Minister can get over anything by simply turning it up, but I wish to tell him that in my own district—though possibly one should not particularise—there is a man working in the Railway Department for 9s. a day, who is in possession of a worker's home and who has seven children, the eldest being, I believe, about 12 years of age. I ask the Honorary Minister how that man is to get on without applying to the Government for assistance if his 9s. per day is to be reduced by 7.89 per cent.? I suggest that instead of reducing a certain section of the civil service we should institute a graduated scale and make every civil servant pay accordingly. By the same token I do not see why I should pay 7.89 per cent. while the affluent Mr. Walker pays only 7.89 per cent. That is absolutely against the policy which has been preached for years by the Minister himself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not refer to the Attorney General as "Mr. Walker." He must refer to him as "the Attorney General."

The Attorney General: It is rather personal to ask what I have to do with my money.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am sorry, and I withdraw. However, the argument can be applied to any walk of life. It can be applied to a railway officer on 9s. or 10s. a day who pays the 7.89 per cent.—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): There is no system you can introduce that something of the sort cannot be applied to.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am quite aware of that, but certainly it would be better if we had a graduated scale, because then we should be able to apply a principle to which we have long adhered. So much has been said regarding the State trading concerns that one is rather loth to refer to the subject. As regards the State Implement Works, in my opinion there is no fear at all about the ultimate success of that particular venture. I believe the farming members realise that their constituents have been made the subjects of exploitation by the manufacturers of machinery, as well as by the suppliers of most of the commodities that the agriculturist requires. The establishment of the State Implement Works represents the carrying out of a policy to which those members themselves subscribed, so that, at all events, an attempt might be made to give the farmer cheaper machinery. I am indeed pleased that the Minister in charge of the works has made an effort to improve the business methods which obtained there from the inception of the undertaking. In my opinion, the state of affairs under the gentleman who resigned from the managership was simply awful. From the complaints I have received from Geraldton I am convinced that the conduct of business in the past has been most unreliable. Farmers could place no reliance whatever on promises that they would receive their machinery at a specified date. On wiring to the works for explanation, they would be informed that the machinery would come to hand on such and such a date. Later on, they would have to wire again, when another date would be fixed. I know of a great deal of business which had to be transferred from the State Implement Works

to other manufacturers of machinery simply because of the obsolete business methods which ruled in the Government undertaking. If we are to make a success of this machinery business, we must realise at once that we have to work on strict business lines. In the machinery business are to be found, I believe, some of the keenest commercial intellects in the whole of Australia—men who have got everything down to a fraction in the business, who have made it as fine as it can possibly be run. It is up against these people that we have to work in order to make a success.

The Minister for Works: You agree that it is necessary to have the cost of the machines?

Mr. HEITMANN: Certainly.

The Minister for Works: I have not got the cost of one yet.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is a very extraordinary thing.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Then, how did you arrive at the selling prices?

The Minister for Works: I think they must have been guessed at.

Mr. HEITMANN: From what I can gather, the various heads and Mr. Davies simply decided that they could turn out machines for such and such a price, and then they decided to sell at that price. I am satisfied that with proper business methods the State Implement Works could be made a splendid success. The management, I notice, have awakened to the fact that there are opponents in the field, and keen and strong opponents too, and accordingly are opening up depôts in various parts of the State. I regret, however, that although a dépôt has been in process of establishment in Geraldton for two or three months, there was not a single machine in the shed when I was last there. We must recognise that the farmer wants to see his machine, and that he wants to be in close touch with the dépôt so as to be able to obtain spares or extra parts. Until the State Implement Works provide those facilities for the farmer, it is hopeless to expect to do that business which the works should do. As regards

the State Steamship Service, I am pleased to see that a move has been made in the right direction. At all events, the management have made an alteration. From my own slight experiences of the steamers, gained in my own port of Geraldton, it appeared to me that every man on board who wore a uniform was captain. This applied on the "Western Australia," at all events. It is well for us to recognize that if the service is to be made a successful concern, there must be one captain on each boat, and one only. I believe an improvement has been effected by the transference of a captain from one boat to another—a good man, I believe, but too lenient, or else he would not be sufficiently troubled to deal with the men. I have a letter in this connection from one of the officials of the Shearers' Union, and I learn that the conditions on the "Western Australia" on her last trip were simply disgusting. No other term would describe it. I am pleased that this particular steamer is bound for other shores, and I hope we may receive a good price for her. I did express the wish that a torpedo might get her, but I am sure she could pass right through the North Sea with perfect safety. Another State enterprise to which I desire to refer is the State boarding house managed by the Honorary Minister (Mr. Underwood). In moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply last session, I expressed the opinion that it was bad policy to keep in idleness the class of individuals accommodated at that institution. Ever since I have known Perth, for the last eleven years, I have recognised a number of men who have never worked, who would not work, and to whom the present system of free lodgings and free meals represents an ideal existence. To those men the system does away with the necessity for eadging a threepence for a pot and counter lunch, and altogether they are having a very good time. I do not say that this applies by any means to the majority of the men who are being assisted. I fully realise that there are scores of people about Perth who do not want charity and who undoubtedly are desirous of procuring work. Probably

the great majority of the men receiving Government assistance are desirous of securing work. In my opinion, it is not difficult, or at all events not altogether impossible, to ensure that the men should do a little work in return for the assistance they are receiving. That system obtains in connection with the assistance rendered by the relief fund committee, working in conjunction with the municipal councils. Under that system a man is given work for a day and a half per week, or for whatever time his requirements make necessary.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: The Perth City Council took a lot of forcing into it.

Mr. HEITMANN: I believe that is so; but, all the same, that does not take away from the benefits of such assistance. It does appear to me that it should not be impossible to inaugurate a scheme under which these men must work in order that they may obtain board and bed. I urge this because a number of the men, as long as the Government are prepared to furnish two meals and a bed per day, regard themselves as being in clover. They are not anxious to go any further. Moreover, the present system is bad for the individual who has not come to that stage. After all, the unemployable is to a great extent manufactured by the system under which he lives. The man who, finding himself out of employment for a certain time, discovers that he can live without working, gradually arrives at that stage when he says to himself, "Well, I am not going to work any longer." I am inclined to think we are manufacturing that class of individual in the State boarding-house controlled by the Honorary Minister. I suggest that the hon. gentleman consider the advisability of getting something in return from these people who are being kept, week after week, in the State boarding-house. As I have already mentioned, the Unemployed Relief Fund are doing it and the City Council are working in with them. If it was only shifting sand backwards and forwards, it would be better than giving them beds and meals for nothing.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You do not know that they are working in King's Park?

Mr. HEITMANN: I do not, but I do know that hundreds of them have for months past received meals and beds without working for them. If the Minister has found them employment in King's Park I am very glad to hear it. I want next to refer to the electoral office of this State, although it has been said here that we should not go beyond questions of policy. I would, however, impress upon the Minister the absolute necessity of bringing about a scheme for the amalgamation of both rolls, Federal and State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): My advice is to keep off all things Federal.

Mr. HEITMANN: I believe, in spite of compulsory enrolment, that the State roll is in a better condition than the Federal. I want to impress upon the Minister the necessity for having some defined policy in regard to the officers who are doing electoral work. In my own district we find officers of the Lands Department doing the work one day, and on the next day we may find it in the hands of officers in the Savings Bank, and then later on being carried out by officers in the Treasury, whilst at the present time, I understand, they are looking for men to perform the duties. All this means that the work is not done properly. Recently between 700 or 800 names were struck off the roll in my electorate and the man was just in the middle of his work when he was transferred to another department, and it required some days to find another officer to complete what had been begun. It is clear that the work must be overlapping.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I am not going to have the Federal.

Mr. HEITMANN: I knew the time when the hon. member preached otherwise.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I know, but I have been converted.

Mr. HEITMANN: Just as I have been myself.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): In regard to electoral matters the Federal Administration is about as bad as it can possibly be.

Mr. HEITMANN: At all events, it is admitted that it is a long way behind our system, in spite of the fact that they have permanent officers doing nothing else, whereas we have to depend to a great extent on honorary services. Viewed from that standpoint, the State does remarkably well, but all the same there is overlapping and a waste of money, which we can ill-afford.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: The trouble is the confusion of the public.

Mr. HEITMANN: Surely the combined brains of the Electoral Departments of the State and of the Commonwealth could evolve some scheme to obviate the signing of so many claim forms. I remember the time when we had to sign no fewer than four times in order to get our names on the one roll, and when objection was taken it was said that this could not be done without. It will not be long before one signature will be sufficient to entitle us to a vote. Reference has been made by one or two speakers to that paragraph in the Governor's Speech dealing with the regulation of mines. I know there are many members on both sides of the House who realise that the cost in human life of the production of gold in Western Australia is altogether too great. I, like the member for Hannans and other hon. members, have had experience of men coming down and asking that they might be assisted to get into the sanatorium. This is happening even to-day, and in many instances these unfortunate people know that they are going there to pass the last few weeks of their lives. If these men could only get there early—and if it were not for having to support wives and families they would do so—many of them would benefit to such an extent that they would subsequently be able to carry on a lighter and different occupation, and live for years. Unfortunately,

however, we have not perfected a scheme for bringing the miner out of a mine the moment it is found there is anything wrong with him. I am delighted to know that in Mr. Dodd, the Honorary Minister in the Legislative Council, we have one who organised a project for giving assistance in this matter, namely, the Miners' Relief Fund, and it is possible to-day, by means of that fund, for a miner to receive assistance while he is receiving medical attention in the sanatorium.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister). Not for tuberculosis.

Mr. HEITMANN: If that is the case, then, it is most stupid, because, in spite of the fact that medical men said years ago that there was no miners' phthisis not one miner in 50 dies from the effects of the dust, unless it is added to by the tubercular germ.

Mr. Taylor: They are at the Subiaco institution from all over the goldfields and they are beyond all hope.

Mr. HEITMANN: The miner will work until he is at a very low stage, and I do not think there are many suffering seriously from fibrosis or other troubles without other diseases as well. The time has arrived when we should consider some scheme by which we should make a systematic and sensible attempt to cope, not only with tuberculosis, but other diseases as well, whether they come from a mine or a farm. I am pleased to know that the miners have accepted the scheme of insurance which they were up against for many years, and it would be infinitely better, in my opinion, if we removed the Medical and Health Department in the State and substituted a scheme of insurance, even if we only covered the one disease. I would impress upon members of the mining districts the fact that there is room for work in this direction. I know that they are waiting for the Mines Regulation Bill to be introduced and that they are in hopes of a good set of regulations resulting, and that then a great amount of the trouble will pass. I think, however, the finest regulations ever drawn up will not prevent a great deal of the

trouble which exists to-day. The fact that a Miners' Relief Fund is in existence should not stay the efforts of hon. members in any degree, and the energies of the Chamber should be directed in the way of prevention. I shall be prepared at all times, having had experience amongst these unfortunate people, to give all the assistance I possibly can in the direction of improving the condition of things. Only in the last month, five of my old friends at the Pingal mine have fallen victims to the disease. The member for Cue has a list containing over 100 names of Britishers who only a few years ago were strong and healthy and were earning their livelihood in the Pingal mine, but who to-day are either dead or are physical wrecks. This is altogether too much, and I feel that members of all sections of the community should endeavour to assist in the way of preventing this great sacrifice of human life. There is only one other question I wish to refer to, the now noted contract in connection with the Wyndham freezing works. I have listened to the explanation given by the Minister but I must confess that I am not satisfied with it, neither was there a sufficient reason given for the sinking entirely of a principle which has been preached for years from the housetops by the party on this side of the House. As one who subscribed to this principle—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Not always.

Mr. HEITMANN: Any one can say "not always" without anything definite being arrived at. I have not yet learned a sufficient reason for the Government dropping *holus bolus* the principle that when it is necessary to let a contract, that contract should be open to tender. The explanation given was, I believe, that time was the essence of the contract and that a board appointed by the Government recommended the Government to accept the offer of Nevanas. In regard to the first reason, it will be generally recognised that it will not hold water. For 10 years we have discussed the proposition of providing freezing works at Wyndham, and a matter of three or four

or even six months' delay in the calling for tenders would not have made any difference.

Member: We missed the 'bus.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is no reason why we should not make an effort to catch the 'bus. There may be no very strong reason. In my opinion that is not sufficient ground for the Government casting aside the principle that contracts shall be let by open tender. If we are to adopt the policy of accepting tenders without calling publicly for them, it will lead to a pretty bad state of affairs in Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: It all depends.

Mr. HEITMANN: I remember that the Minister, like myself and other members of the Labour party, for long protested against these methods. When in Opposition we were always crying out that light should be thrown upon certain actions of the Government of the day. I remember, too, how the Minister, in common with every member of the Labour party throughout the Commonwealth, condemned in the strongest possible terms the contract secretly let to Teesdale Smith.

The Minister for Works: I never uttered a word about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: I did, and I believe effectively too.

Mr. Taylor: It put the Cook Government out.

Mr. HEITMANN: I will not say that. They had so very much at their doors. I am not discussing the question of contract versus day labour. I believe in day labour, and I believe I assisted as much as anyone in having the question brought prominently before the House in regard to railway construction. Yet I recognise there are times when it is preferable to do certain work by contract, and that in regard to the work at Wyndham, 2,000 or 3,000 miles from the capital, it may be preferable to carry it out by contract. But if we are going to do it by contract, let the public have an opportunity of seeing what the price should be. In other words, let public tenders be called. The

second reason, namely, the recommendation of the board appointed by the Government, will not hold water, because, after all it is not for the board or for any officer of the Government to lay down the policy of the Government in regard to whether the work should be done by contract without calling for tenders, or whether the question should arise of contract versus day labour.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You would accept your officers' advice?

Mr. HEITMANN: It is very easy to indicate to your officers what advice you require.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Perhaps so, if you had a man at the head who would indicate it. But if you have an honest man there it is all right.

Mr. HEITMANN: There is no question of dishonesty. Before to-day officers have brought in reports which, had they been given full liberty, they would not have brought in.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you suggest the officers were not given full liberty in this case?

Mr. HEITMANN: I will not go that far.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): But you infer it.

Mr. HEITMANN: I will not go even that far. But, on the file dealing with the matter, there is a minute setting out the time these gentlemen had the files and the plans and specifications from day to day, extending over a number of days, and giving the time for each day. The Minister for Works will correct me if that is not true.

The Minister for Works: Giving the dates, that is all.

Mr. HEITMANN: I believe, too, that at least some of the members of this board declared that they had neither sufficient time nor sufficient data. The file will show whether or not that is correct.

The Minister for Works: It could not have been said in regard to the number of days. They were emphatic on that.

Mr. HEITMANN: But if they had not sufficient time to go into the details how could they make a recommendation?

The Minister for Works: They had gone into the matter of the cost previously.

Mr. HEITMANN: Will the Minister tell us what space was occupied by the specifications, which were drawn up by Mr. Nevanas?

The Minister for Works: I have never seen them.

Mr. HEITMANN: It would be interesting to know. Plans and specifications for an ordinary four-roomed cottage occupy five or six pages of foolscap.

The Minister for Works: They contain the conditions of contract, which, in this case, were printed.

Mr. HEITMANN: I will accept that. With other members I have often said that the sleepless nights of contractors resulted from trying to break through the specifications in order to set up extras. That is the position with the departmental officers drawing up the specification, and drawing the plans. What, then, would be the position of a contractor who drew up his own plans, and who therefore possibly could interpret them in any way he liked?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He could not interpret them sufficiently well to go on with the work.

Mr. HEITMANN: The man did not go on with the work! The man could not go on with the work. He did not have a five pound note when he came here. He never has spent ten pounds in Western Australia, other than as board money. The man was an adventurer, absolutely.

Mr. Bolton: Somebody stood to him to the tune of £60,000.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am game to bet to-day's salary, which is small, that he did not spend £2,000.

Mr. Bolton: No, somebody stood to him.

Mr. Male: He had £1,000.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is engaged, not in addressing the House, but in an argument across the Chamber.

Mr. HEITMANN: At all events, it must be recognised by the Ministry that it is bad policy to allow a contractor to draw his own specifications.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): No.

Mr. Bolton: When he drew up the specification he was not the contractor.

Mr. HEITMANN: He seemed to be so positive that he was to be the contractor that he drew up his specifications in a very secure way for himself.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He could not go on with it. What are you talking about?

Mr. HEITMANN: He could not go on because he did not have a five pound note with which to clear his goods at Fremantle. His credit lasted till he reached Fremantle, when he could not get discharge, and the Government had to step in and take over the material from him.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They did not have to.

Mr. HEITMANN: It is said that there was no contract. Why all these suppositious cases put up by the Honorary Minister?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why these suppositious cases put up by the *Sunday Times*? That is where you got your information. Webb has been talking to you.

Mr. HEITMANN: I do not know Webb, and "Dryblower" does not come within the family circle. It is a simple matter for a contractor to draw up specifications, basing his costs upon certain things. For instance, Mr. Nevanas could easily say, "I based my costs on 29s. a ton to carry the stuff up from here to Wyndham by the State boat."

The Minister for Works: He could not do that, for he was told they would not agree to it.

Mr. HEITMANN: Later on, when he finds he is all out in his calculation, who will have to pay?

Mr. Taylor: The same old people who always pay.

Mr. HEITMANN: The explanations given by the Minister for Works and the Premier leave a lot to be desired.

The Minister for Works: They are correct, though.

Mr. HEITMANN: I have my doubts about that.

The Minister for Works: You can find out.

Mr. HEITMANN: Where?

The Minister for Works: At my office. I will show you the file.

Mr. HEITMANN: The Minister has not the file.

The Minister for Works: I have.

Mr. HEITMANN: You have one file. Will the complete file be laid on the Table, showing all negotiations between Nevanas and the Government?

The Minister for Works: All negotiations so far as the Public Works are concerned you can get at any time.

Mr. HEITMANN: The Government are foolish in trying to hide this matter.

The Minister for Works: They are not trying to hide.

Mr. HEITMANN: Well, why not place all the papers on the Table

The Minister for Works: You or any other member can see the file in my office.

Mr. HEITMANN: It has been a disastrous affair for the State. The Government have ridden roughshod over one of the principles which must for purity's sake underly the public life. They have, for no apparent reason, let to a man of straw a contract without tender for the huge sum of £155,000. That is my opinion of Mr. Nevanas. Again, what is to prevent another contractor coming in and saying, "Under the conditions pertaining to this contract let to Nevanas I can do it for £140,000."

The Minister for Works: What conditions?

Mr. HEITMANN: The conditions under which Nevanas secured the contract.

The Minister for Works: It was subject to conditions approved by the Chief Architect. He was the man who had to decide.

Mr. HEITMANN: Decide what?

The Minister for Works: The conditions.

Mr. HEITMANN: They were already drawn up. They would be the same for

any other contract. Seeing that no time would have been lost in calling for tenders, what was to prevent the Government following this course and giving the country the benefit of the competition, which is pretty keen at present?

The Minister for Works: Not too keen.

Mr. HEITMANN: I have found it so. It is pretty keen where the building of a cottage is concerned. The Government would have been wise and would have avoided a lot of trouble had they called for tenders. It is absolutely indefensible that we should go to a private firm whose character is doubtful.

The Minister for Works: Nothing doubtful about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: Whose character is doubtful, and hand over a contract for £155,000.

The Minister for Works: And so save £55,000.

Mr. HEITMANN: Nothing of the kind. There is nothing to show that that saving would have been effected.

The Minister for Works: Yes, on the advice of the officers.

Mr. HEITMANN: The officers' advice did not say that £55,000 would be saved.

The Minister for Works: Well, £50,000.

Mr. HEITMANN: It was said at first that we had no one in the State who knew anything about this class of work. Later on the specifications were altered in order to perform certain other work; which shows that Mr. Nevanas was not the great specialist we were led to believe. There is nothing to prevent another contractor saying "I could do it for less."

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. HEITMANN: I have very little further to say on the subject of the Wyndham freezing works contract. I have criticised the Government's action in this connection because I am totally opposed to it.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And their honesty.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will not take notice of interruptions.

Mr. HEITMANN: If the Honorary Minister will state implicitly whom he means by "their"—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Ministers.

Mr. HEITMANN: I have not criticised their honesty. I will say, however, that Nevanas has done exceedingly well out of this State. I have criticised the Government because of their action in dropping overboard one of the principles of the party and because I desire to dissociate myself from their action in so doing.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: But they have gone back; it cost them £50,000.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am not discussing whether the Government saved money or otherwise. I take exception to letting a contract to a private individual without publicly calling for tenders. If the Honorary Minister says I have reflected on the honesty of members of the Government, that is not true; but if he will only consider for a moment he will realise that such actions as these are liable to bring any kind of accusation in their train. As a matter of fact, he in common with every member of the Labour party would have condemned such a procedure if another party had been responsible for it. I have vivid recollections of an occasion when a Minister, because he had failed to throw sufficient light on a certain question, was subject to cries of impeachment from the Labour party. I remember, too, that the Labour party have continually urged that on questions of this kind, all possible light should be thrown. It is said that Mr. Nevanas could not carry out his contract, but in the first place the Government said there was no contract, but only an interim agreement.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Mr. HEITMANN: Does the Minister wish to convey that there was no contract, and that this expert, this financial genius involved himself in the expenditure of £40,000 or £50,000 without having a contract;

The Minister for Works: Yes, I do.

Mr. HEITMANN: Then the contention that Nevanas was a clever individual

or a man worthy of consideration falls to the ground.

The Minister for Works: That is his own look-out.

Mr. HEITMANN: For the Minister to say there was no contract is only quibbling.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. HEITMANN: Then Nevanas involved himself in the purchase of some £50,000 or £60,000 worth of material—

The Minister for Works: To be correct £63,000.

Mr. HEITMANN: Does the Minister mean to tell us that this clever individual would have done so without having a contract?

The Minister for Works: He would have had a contract if he could have carried out the conditions which he did not and could not do.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Why did you pay him 5 per cent. for doing nothing?

The Minister for Works: Because it paid the Government to get the material.

Mr. HEITMANN: I admit that the Government made a good deal in taking over the material because much of the stuff could not be obtained at present and practically the whole of it has increased in value. Therefore, no exception can be taken to that, but I would ask if there was no contract, why all these negotiations as to prices?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Do not you negotiate before you sign a contract?

Mr. HEITMANN: Negotiation would be to arrive at a settlement as to what Nevanas should receive.

The Attorney General: That was an entirely new affair. The man was here with his goods. The contract was at an end. If the Government had left him he would have had these goods on his hands. We took them over at a price.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Then there was a contract?

The Minister for Works: You can see the file.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Why not lay it on the Table?

The Minister for Works: No; come to the office and see it. The member for Northam has examined it.

Mr. HEITMANN: It must be apparent to anyone that a contract was entered into between Nevanas and the Government.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Nevanas did not go on.

Mr. HEITMANN: That does not get away from the fact that a contract was entered into. Why was it entered into?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Because it was suitable to Western Australia.

Mr. HEITMANN: Who said it was suitable?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Cabinet.

Mr. George: How did they know?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): On the advice of their officers.

Mr. HEITMANN: Contractors in this State and in the Eastern States had no opportunity to tender.

Mr. George: Did these people ever build freezing works?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Yes.

Mr. George: Where?

Mr. HEITMANN: It was contended that Nevanas was an expert, and it was alleged that he was concerned with huge works in New Zealand.

Mr. George: He had nothing to do with them. He was a purchaser of frozen meat.

Mr. HEITMANN: It was stated that Nevanas had Newton Moore's guarantee. That was not worth much in regard to the steamer "Western Australia." All the same, the matter of providing freezing works in the North did not rest with Newton Moore. All the certificates from bankers in London would not touch the subject of my protest, namely, the letting of the contract without calling for public tenders.

The Minister for Works: You just said Nevanas was a man of straw and had not £5 to his name, and all that sort of thing.

Mr. HEITMANN: If he was this financial genius, who was backing him?

The Minister for Works: I do not know.

Mr. HEITMANN: If he was this financial genius, why was his material hung up in Fremantle? Why could not he get it into this State?

The Minister for Works: It was in the State.

Mr. HEITMANN: But he could not get it. As a matter of fact Nevanas has not outlaid a penny in Western Australia. He got paid for all he did, but I am not objecting to that.

Mr. Taylor: And took it away with him.

Mr. HEITMANN: In my opinion he was a pure adventurer.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Not the only one in the world.

Mr. HEITMANN: That does not excuse it. Nevanas might well say—"I came, I saw, I conquered." Nevanas has done well out of this State, and has done well because the Government saw fit to give him this contract.

Mr. George: Apparently then he did the country.

The Minister for Works: He did not do much out of the contract.

Mr. George: He beat the Labour party at any rate.

Mr. HEITMANN: He went away from this State a few thousand pounds richer than he came to it.

The Minister for Works: I do not think he did.

Mr. HEITMANN: Leaving the question of contract, the Government would be wise to forego the expenditure of this large sum of money at present.

The Minister for Works: That is at the bottom of it, is it?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I thought you would come to that; you want the freezing works at Geraldton.

Mr. HEITMANN: If I did, it would not be by a tender under the lap. It must be evident to the Government that their expenditure of £200,000 of loan

funds could be better applied in other parts of the State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It could not be better applied than to supply meat to the British army.

Mr. HEITMANN: The war will last considerably longer than I expect if the Wyndham freezing works are going to be of any assistance.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): If we had got the contract through, they would have been of assistance.

Mr. HEITMANN: The works were to have been completed by 1916, but I do not think this fact influenced the Minister when he was considering the question of giving the contract to Nevanas.

Mr. George: What influenced him then?

Mr. HEITMANN: There was no justification on the score of time and there was no legitimate reason why the contract should have been let simply because it was recommended by officers of the department.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Whom the Premier stated knew nothing about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is a phase which might be inquired into. I have no desire to say more than that officers who could not draw up plans and specifications were told off to sit in judgment upon Nevanas's plans and specifications.

The Attorney General: That is quite feasible. A man might be able to judge the merits of a plan drawn up by another and not be able to draw up a plan himself.

Mr. HEITMANN: The Minister knows that there are architects in Australia who could have drawn up plans; professional men keep up to date in their knowledge of these things. There is no special work carried on in any part of the world which is not known to a progressive architect.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Our architects are not up to date as regards reinforced concrete.

Mr. HEITMANN: That is possible. I have criticised this because I believe it to be wrong. I think the Ministry made a blunder. In making this blunder

they have deviated from the principle laid down for many years. I have not been consulted but I have to take the responsibility.

The Minister for Works: You need not.

Mr. HEITMANN: It is not left open to you to say whether I shall take the responsibility or not.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You can please yourself about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: I cannot even do that. Every member of this House has to take his responsibility in the matter.

Mr. George: Not for that contract; we knew nothing about it.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am quite aware that because I have differed from the Government my motives are liable to misconstruction, and possibly even members of my own party will misconstrue my criticism of this question. But I have considered all that, and could not see any other way out of it but to publicly proclaim that I was opposed to the letting of the contract, particularly for such a large amount, without tenders first being called publicly. I take the full responsibility for all that I have said. During the evening I also made some remarks in regard to the 44 hours week. The alternative proposal I put forward I believe to be an improvement on the one at present applying, and which cannot be applied with equity. One cannot possibly apply a principle of a graduated tax if one follows the method which has been pursued up-to-date. There is only one other question I would like to touch upon briefly; that is in regard to the system of supplying medical officers in our different towns. As an instance, I want to quote the case of Perth. I do not wish to be connected in any way with the discussion which has gone on recently in the Press, or with the revelations which have been made before the Commission. I do think, however, that it is positively a bad policy in a city like Perth to have these district medical officers only part paid. It gives the individual a standing which enables him to make a tremendous sal-

ary, and does not have the requisite effect upon the city from the point of view of public health. There is any amount of scope here, and numerous duties to occupy all the time of a fully paid officer. It is not after all a question of dealing with public illnesses as they arrive, but the up-to-date method is one of prevention, and this is the only method which can effectively be applied in eradicating disease. There is, I say, any amount of work to do in Perth for a fully paid officer, who should be closely connected with our medical and health department and the laboratory. I believe it would pay the Government handsomely if they were to employ a man and not stint him as to salary. Let them employ a man who has studied preventive hygiene, and one who could do all examining work (now done by the present officer who is allowed to charge) of all the officers of the State departments. The Government would be wise if they were to appoint a thoroughly qualified man, and even pay him a salary of from £12,000 to £15,000 a year. I trust that the Honorary Minister will consider that question. Attention has been directed towards this by the Commission which recently inquired into certain cases, and I believe it would be supported by the medical profession, and would certainly receive the recognition and support of the Medical and Health Department.

Mr. VERYARD (Leederville) [S.40]. I think that nearly all members who have addressed the House have referred largely to the critical position of the State's finances and also to the deficit which is at present with us. I do not propose to occupy much of the time of the House. There is, however, just one point in regard to our local reinforcements to which I would like to draw attention, not that this House has any voice in the matter. Possibly, however, the fact of a complaint being voiced here will have some effect in the right quarter. I have heard many complaints from our soldiers that they are not paid on the regular pay days. They have to wait in some cases several weeks before they get their money at all.

This, I think, is a grievance which should be rectified. A case has also come to my knowledge wherein a wife of one of the members of the Expeditionary Force, whose husband has had to retire owing to ill-health, had to attend the pay office six or eight times to get the money due, amounting to 6s. or 7s. It seems to me that the authorities are very inconsiderate in keeping back the pay of these people.

Mr. Bolton. Are you not on speaking terms with Mr. Fowler, the Federal member?

Mr. VERYARD: He is not here to look after these things.

Mr. Bolton. It is your business to bring it under his notice.

Mr. VERYARD: I wish to commend the Government so far as concerns their intention to introduce a Bill in regard to a referendum on the sale of liquors during certain hours in hotel bars. I regret extremely, and possibly others do in this Chamber, that this was not introduced last session. These men of the Expeditionary Forces are placed in the way of great temptation by their so-called friends who buy drinks for them at every possible opportunity, with the result that we see some of them in the city in such a condition that they reflect very little credit upon themselves or their cloth. I think, if the hours of the sale of liquor were reduced, this state of things might be remedied to some extent. I hope that the referendum will include wine saloons, so that they also shall be closed if the public wish. After the referendum is taken both the Government and Parliament will understand exactly the wishes of the people. With reference to our State Implement Works, I think enough has been said to warrant the appointment of a Royal Commission or select committee to make full inquiry. We have seen correspondence in the Press for some considerable time past, and seen there reflections made upon one and another. I think it would be well if an inquiry was held, and that this would be satisfactory to the Minister and to all.

The Minister for Works: It is quite satisfactory to me; the manager has gone,

Mr. VERYARD: I am quite aware that the Minister said he had nothing to hide and nothing to fear.

The Minister for Works: Nothing at all.

Mr. VERYARD: I am satisfied with that explanation; but if that is so, I fail to see—

The Minister for Works: It is so.

Mr. VERYARD: I fail to see why there should be any opposition to an inquiry being held.

The Minister for Works: You would not agree to give it to a labourer working for 9s. a day.

Mr. VERYARD: I have always believed in the policy of paying men good wages.

The Minister for Works: I am talking about an inquiry; not wages.

Mr. VERYARD: If a master wants to get good work out of his men he has to pay good wages. That, at all events, is the policy I adopt in my own business. The discussion in relation to the State Implement Works has shown the unionists in a new light. We hear a great deal about preference to unionists. Here we have preference amongst unionists, because we have it stated that certain men were to be dismissed because they happened to be the political opponents of the party in power.

The Minister for Works: One man said he voted for me, anyhow, and he got the sack.

Mr. S. Stubbs: He ought to be reinstated.

Mr. VERYARD: It appears to me that the principle now is that a man to get work must be a unionist and also a member of the Labour party.

The Minister for Works: If we carry that into effect we should have to sack almost every foreman in Government employment.

Mr. VERYARD: I am not opposed to unionism.

Mr. Bolton: You may have mentioned it.

Mr. VERYARD: I have always considered that men are justified in combining for their protection and mutual assistance.

but when preference to unionists, especially when that is of a political colour, is in vogue it does not commend itself to me.

The Minister for Works: I suppose you were not told that the man I instructed should not be sacked was a Liberal.

Mr. VERYARD: I do not know any who are personally concerned in the matter at all.

Mr. Hudson: Would you be in favour of a Royal Commission to inquire into the accuracy of Press reports?

Mr. VERYARD: In the early days of unionism one of the first qualifications for a unionist was that the candidate should produce his indenture form. This system has, I think, long since passed away.

Mr. Foley: Quite right, too.

Mr. VERYARD: Now anybody, whether he is good, bad, or indifferent as a tradesman, is welcomed into the ranks, and the indifferent man expects to get the same pay as the best tradesmen are getting, and does not earn his money.

Mr. Heitmann: In the early days the first qualification for a justice of the peace was that he supported Sir John Forrest.

Mr. VERYARD: If the members of unions were always good tradesmen, employers would give preference to them at any time over bad tradesmen.

Mr. Foley: There is a law or rule in unions that indifferent tradesmen and incompetent workers are provided for.

Mr. VERYARD: I am aware that the workers' position has been considerably improved by the organisation of unions, but I decline to believe that preference should be given to anybody simply because he is a unionist. To do so is an injustice to the better tradesmen, and violates the principle of fair play and equal opportunity for all. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) has spoken at considerable length with reference to the contract for the Wyndham Freezing Works. I think the Premier made out a clear case so far as the Government side of the question is concerned, but I feel that the public are by no means satisfied with that declaration. When they are done they have to find a

further £50,000 to complete that contract, and also to pay compensation to the extent of £3,190. That does not seem to me a good business transaction. I am aware that the Minister for Works has denied that any compensation has been paid. The fact remains, however, that Mr. Nevanas, reporting as an expert to the Government, stated that the work could be done for £155,000, and that, when asked whether he could do it at the price, he backed his word by contracting to construct the works at his estimate. Whether or not there was an agreement or a contract does not matter much. There is the fact that Mr. Nevanas, or his company, brought goods and stock here to the value of £60,000, being two-fifths of the total contract. At this stage the contract was annulled. The Premier says the contractors failed to carry out the contract, did not proceed with the work. I wonder whether the course adopted in this case represents the ordinary treatment given by Governments to contractors in default. If so, here is an easy way of getting out of a contract that is not payable. Among business men the usual way is to make the contractor carry out his contract. Whether the Government had instructions from the Trades Hall on this subject I do not know.

Mr. Foley: Why drag the Trades Hall into it? Has any proof been offered you that the Trades Hall had anything to do with the matter?

Mr. VERYARD: I know the Trades Hall some time back agitated for the work to be done by day labour.

Mr. Foley: Do you really think the Trades Hall had anything to do with this?

Mr. VERYARD: I am only suggesting that something must have happened to make the Government so ready to cancel the contract. In the circumstances, it seems to me Mr. Nevanas was exceedingly fortunate to receive plus 5 per cent. on the goods.

The Minister for Works: We would not have had them else.

Mr. VERYARD: Very likely; but nobody except the Government was in the market. The goods would have been of little value to anybody else. I do not

think anyone else in Western Australia would have bought those goods. From what has been stated, it seems clear that the Government cancelled the contract or agreement and, as I said, paid compensation to the extent of £3,190. The difference between the Government's price and the expert's price—and I take it he was an expert, and ought to have known exactly what he was doing—plus the amount of compensation, represents, to my mind, what the State will have to pay extra in order to allow the work to be completed by day labour. That is a total of £33,190—practically the total of last year's returns from income tax. I am not blaming the Government or the Trades Hall so much in this matter, because the people put the present Government into power, and they have to pay the piper for doing so. While I do not wish to extend my remarks, I must re-echo the hope which has been uttered here to-night that there will be no more secret contracts. We have had two or three, and they reflect no credit on anybody. Any further contracts to be made by the Government should be advertised in the ordinary way and everyone allowed a fair chance to tender for the work.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [8.5]: In rising to speak on the Address-in-reply I will deal with the following passage in the Governor's Speech—

I desire to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the situation is undoubtedly grave and that we need all our resources, both of men and money, to accomplish the task in hand. As hon. members are aware, I am connected with a party that is directly interested in primary production. In my opinion, primary production offers the quickest and the best means of restoring the finances of the State to a position satisfactory and advantageous to the whole community. It is contended by the Government that the adverse season in the agricultural industry is largely responsible for the increase in the deficit. Adopting that argument, does it not follow that prosperous conditions in the same industry would mean prosperity for the State as a whole?

Here in Western Australia we have a good deal of latent wealth. That latent wealth needs to be made active, and to get that latent wealth active we must first of all bring our primary enterprises into a flourishing condition. If success is going to attend the arms of Germany, that will be due not altogether to the military position of Germany, but to its industrial position. Germany is going to be the greatest trouble the British Empire has ever had to contend against, and it is up to us in Western Australia, as also the remainder of the British Empire, to see that the industrial portion of the community backs up the military enterprise of the brave soldiers at the front. The easiest and quickest means of doing that is for each man engaged in industrial enterprises to put his shoulder to the wheel and do his level best to attain the common goal. As the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullaney) said last session, it is just as wrong for the employee not to give value in return for the money he receives as it is for the employer to sweat his workers. I consider it highly important that, no matter in what walk of life we are, we should return value for value received. Since this session opened, I have asked a few questions with regard to one of our primary industries—a primary industry which I consider vitally affects the State of Western Australia. I asked those questions not with any desire whatever of hindering or embarrassing the Administration, but solely with the object of enlightening the people, the Government, and the members of this Chamber generally. I consider I am quite correct in my estimate of the loss which this State is suffering as the result of present methods of selling our products. In reply to a question I asked to-day I was informed that the loss on wheat exported in jutes amounts to £56,971. I was also informed that on wheat used and milled in the State the loss on jutes amounts to £24,248. Again, in respect of chaff, there is a loss on jutes of £90,344. Many people will contend, and this is also contended by the Government, that the loss is not an actual one to the farmer, but represents a fair

charge on production. I take a different stand altogether with regard to the question of jutes. The reason why I am bringing the question forward is that the loss to our producers is so heavy. In any other business an added cost can be passed on to the purchaser or the consumer. In the case of the farmer, however, the cost of production has no actual relation to the sale price of his commodity. Take the case of chaff last season. Chaff prices went up on account of the shortage of fodder. The farmers grow fodder and sell fodder. As regards jutes, however, there is a standard value, and on these figures we lose 90 per cent. on jutes that contain chaff. Again, if two samples of chaff are put in new jute goods, the loss is heavier on the poor quality than on the higher quality. If it were possible for the farmer to do the same as an ordinary merchant does, namely, hand on the added cost to someone else, the position would be different. But it is not so, and every pound that goes out of the farmer's pocket means that there is a pound less for primary production in this State. It may be contended that Governments have nothing to do with business questions of this kind. We find, however, that no less than 2,564 farmers have obtained assistance from the Government through the Industries Assistance Board; and I take it that the Government to-day are co-partners with all the farmers who were helped. Can the community allow these farmers to lose to this extent on that particular item? If the answer is no, then I think something should be done to alter present methods. My contention is that if the jutes are sold at per dozen and the contents at per ton, there would be no loss to anyone. As it is, the farmer loses 90 per cent. on the new jutes. When the jutes are empty and the farmer re-purchases them to refill, the man who sells them back can make 900 per cent. profit, and the farmer has to suffer a corresponding loss. To my way of thinking, that is an insane way of doing business. Yet we, as farmers, cannot help ourselves. We are scattered throughout the country, and we have to depend upon the agents at the various centres. Unfor-

fortunately, our organisation is not so united that we have been able to make a demand on the trade that the condition I complain of shall not continue any longer. I contend that if the best results are to be obtained from primary enterprises, we must lift as much of the load as we possibly can from the primary enterprises. There is another feature to which I wish to call attention. If the gold-mining industry, for example, by any assistance or by improved conditions in the working of the mines, can produce an added value, that is so much the better for the whole State, because, naturally new wealth is of considerably higher value than borrowed money. In respect of new wealth, there is no principal to pay back, neither is there interest nor sinking fund. Another matter I wish to touch on is one brought up to-day by a deputation to the Minister for Water Supply and Sewerage. The present system of the department is bearing heavily upon some portions of our primary industries, and if a readjustment can be made in connection with the agricultural industry, the farmers will be able to graze more sheep and put more acres under crop. That would be a good thing for the whole State. I trust that these matters will occupy the attention of the House, and that their full consideration will not be prevented or interrupted. These are essential matters, because, if we cannot get on the loan market henceforth as we did in the past, then it becomes a matter of each man doing his level best and his part. I trust the House will unitedly work for the betterment of Western Australia.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM (Greenough) [8.15]: I wish to say a few words before this debate closes, but as most of the subjects have been worn rather threadbare there is not much new ground for me to travel over. There is a paragraph in the Governor's Speech which says that the people of the State keenly feel the sadness of the times. That is but too true: both Parliament and the people feel the grave responsibility that rests on them in these trying times. When the history of the present time in this State comes to be written, it will

show that the ninth Parliament of this State had graver responsibilities placed upon its shoulders than any previous Parliament since the advent of Responsible Government. When the first session of this Parliament opened after the election towards the end of last year, this State was suffering from the severest drought it had ever experienced, and through the force of unfortunate circumstances, the Empire was at the same time engaged in the greatest war it had ever known. The drought conditions had to receive first attention; legislation had to be passed in connection with the supplies which were available in the State, in order that these supplies might be obtained from the people who had a surplus, and distributed amongst those who were in need of them. Legislation had also to be introduced for the fair distribution of those supplies. Since then, we are told, that about a third of the farmers have been assisted, and that £626,000 has been expended in that direction, with the result that no less than 1½ million acres have been placed under crop. That is the largest area ever placed under crop in Western Australia, but I do not for one moment say that the assistance given is altogether responsible for that. I do say, however, that the area perhaps would have been considerably less but for the assistance given. Wednesday last was the first anniversary of the declaration of the war, and the position in regard to the war is still very serious, because the end is not in sight. We know that the price of victory will be high, but the generous response of the people on Australia Day to the Red Cross funds, and the patriotic expressions throughout the Empire, go to show that the people of the Empire are determined to continue the war until it can be brought to a successful close. These abnormal conditions have had a serious effect upon the financial condition of the State. It is well known to all of us that not only this State but all the States in Australia have been largely dependent upon money borrowed from outside sources for the carrying out of

a public works policy and the development of resources. On account of the financial stringency brought about by the war in Europe, we find that we cannot any longer borrow from those outside sources, and not only that, but we have to find about 40 millions sterling for Australia's share of the military expenses, in order to carry on the war. If this means anything it means that public works in Australia, for a while at any rate, will have to cease, because funds will not be available with which to carry them on. It will mean also that private individuals, who have been putting their profits into development work, will have to stop that development work and lend those funds to the Commonwealth, in order that its loan may be a success. That is the wisest course to take and it is better for all of us, even looking at it from an individual point of view, that we should put forth every effort to protect what we have in this time of stringency. We are fortunate in one respect, that for the last few years we have been carrying out a vigorous public works policy, and during the last financial year. I understand that 364 miles of railway were opened for traffic and that 413 miles were either under construction or had been authorised, and that altogether we have over 3,300 miles of railway in the State. If we have to stop development work for a time, it will give scope for us to make the best use of our position. We have railway facilities and we can carry on our business in the best way possible for a time. Therefore, I think that since we cannot go in for a vigorous works policy, the best course we can follow is to look after those services we have and make them as efficient as possible so that they may promote the advancement of our primary industries. When we are left to our own resources, we have to look principally to our primary industries in order that we may carry on, because they are the industries which are the very basis of our industrial advancement. Our secondary industries are largely dependent upon the primary industries; therefore, I say, if we look after our primary industries,

we are laying the foundations of our national advancement. Not only will there be a financial strain upon us by having to cease borrowing, and having to lend our funds to the Federal Government, but we must not forget that for some time past the Federal taxation has been increased. The Customs duties were increased only a few months ago and there were also imposed a tax on Crown leases and a tax on probate duties, and now it is proposed to impose a Commonwealth war tax. We know that taxation is necessary in these abnormal times and we do not object to pay a reasonable tax when we know its imposition is warranted. But, owing to the effect that the abnormal conditions have upon the industrial affairs of this State, and the increase in the cost of living, and taking into account also Federal taxation, it is evident that our scope for increased State taxation will be very limited indeed. During my travels through the agricultural districts I heard many complaints in regard to the administration under the Industries Assistance Act. I know that the board appointed to distribute assistance given to settlers in need of it had only a very short time to deal with many matters, and they had a large number of people to look after, while the operations were spread over a very large portion of the State. Therefore, every allowance should be made. I have gone to the board's office and received every courtesy, while the matters I laid before the board were given immediate and strict attention. Although there may have been some reason for complaint, and perhaps defects in the management, I must give the board credit for having done the best under the circumstances. I only mention the fact that complaints existed so that the Administration might exercise care in the future. We know that the season looks promising and that there is likely to be a bountiful harvest, and that the Industries Assistance Board will still have a great deal to do with the crops of those people who have been assisted, and I do hope that every care will be taken and every effort made to prevent

inconvenience being caused to the farmers. This should be possible, because whatever has to be done in the future will not require to be done in such a hurried way as was the case in connection with the distribution of seed and supplies. I have heard a good deal about the land rents. Some settlers take a very serious objection to being asked to borrow money from the Government through the Assistance Board to pay their land rents. A business man will not see much hardship attached to that, but the position is that, for a small amount of rent, a man is practically placing his crop under the Industries Assistance Board, and he is deprived of that liberty he would like in connection with the disposal of the crop. A business man could get out of the difficulty because he could enter into a contract, but all farmers are not business men and I think some move might be made in the direction of remedying this state of affairs. If the land were taken as security against the money specially granted for rent, it would be a way out of the difficulty.

[The Deputy Speaker (Mr. McDowall) took the Chair.]

The Minister for Works: Does not the land belong to the State? How can it be taken as security?

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: It belongs to the State if the rents are not paid. The man who holds the land knows that one of the conditions under which it is held provides for forfeiture, a penalty greater than would be imposed upon him under the Industries Assistance Act. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) pointed out the extent of the production going on in the Victoria district and the lack of facilities at the port of Geraldton.

The Minister for Works: The Commissioner for Railways assures me he can handle without trouble the crop grown in that district this year.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: A few years ago there was great trouble owing to the lack of facilities at Geraldton, but in 1913-14 there was almost as much trouble with the facilities provided, although they managed to deal with the wheat. During

this season, if the crops turn out as we all hope, there will be a greater quantity of stuff to be handled at Geraldton than ever before, and there is a possibility that the existing facilities will not be sufficient to cope with the trade. However, I hope that what the Minister tells me will prove right, and that the Commissioner of Railways is not erring in his judgment. Of course, this is not the time when we can undertake any very big expenditure. The scheme proposed for Geraldton will involve hundreds of thousands of pounds; but if that scheme cannot be carried out immediately I hope something will be done to render the handling facilities sufficient for the next harvest. We have heard a good deal about the trading concerns. I am only a new member and have taken no part in any debate respecting those trading concerns. I know that those enterprises have been initiated in pursuance of a policy put before the people, and that the people sent back to power the party responsible for that policy. Therefore I say our trading concerns are there with the consent and at the will of the people, and while I am a member of this House I shall always endeavour to respect that will. Some of the trading concerns have been established for a little time now, and although it must be allowed that any business requires time in which to prove itself successful, yet we know that the men who started those concerns have been administering them ever since, and so, if those enterprises are not a success their failure cannot be attributed to unsympathetic administration. On many occasions I hear that they are a failure. I am not prepared to say they are. Perhaps they are not. However, they were established at the will of the people, and should have a fair trial. If, after a fair trial with fair administration, it is found that any of these trading concerns is a failure, it should be candidly admitted that it is a failure, and we should take the wise course of cutting our loss. Nevertheless, I hope none of these trading concerns will prove a failure. They are now established, and the people are responsible for the money invested in them, and I sincerely hope they will prove a success.

Mr. Taylor: If an election were to be held to-morrow, and this party was defeated, would you say it was defeated on those trading concerns alone?

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: I am not prepared to answer that offhand. Touching on the controversy in regard to the State Implement Works I, like the member for Geraldton, have come across farmers well disposed towards those works, but who, on ordering implements from those works, have seen weeks pass without any acknowledgment of their orders. In the end they have grown tired of waiting, cancelled their orders, repeated them to a private firm and had the orders fulfilled with the least possible delay.

The Minister for Works: It will be different under the new management at the State Implement Works.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: And one or two have declared to me that any correspondence they do get from the State Implement Works comes to hand in unstamped envelopes. This state of affairs should not be allowed to exist. No private firm could hope to succeed under similar conditions, and certainly our trading concerns will not prove successful except under businesslike management. I do not wish to enter into the merits of the controversy between the late manager of the State Implement Works and the Minister for Works. The Minister, I feel sure, will throw more light on the subject later in the session, and as I know only what I have seen in the Press I will welcome the Minister's statement.

The Minister for Works: I wish I could give you the costs of manufacture, but unfortunately I cannot.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) said there was too much of the "happy family" spirit in the House, but that probably the Press would compensate that later. These are abnormal times, and if the "happy family" element will enable us to put forth a united effort in the interests of the State, it is not amiss. I hope that when we meet again the abnormal conditions now prevailing will have passed away. I hope that the war will come to

a speedy close, and that we will have a fruitful victory and a lasting peace.

Mr. HARDWICK (East Perth) [8.38]: I was pleased to notice the objection taken by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) when he made reference to the State boarding house, which, by the way, happens to be situated in my constituency.

The Minister for Works: You were elected by it.

Mr. Munsie: You are not expecting an election now?

Mr. HARDWICK: One can never tell. What we have heard here to-night would lead one to think that if a vote of no-confidence were moved at present the Government would not be too happy. Getting back to that popular resort in East Perth, I may say it was my privilege on one occasion to attend a deputation of influential men who complained of the nature and quality of the food being supplied at that institution. One burly gentleman in particular, a boarder at that sanatorium, complained loudly because of having found an innocent little cockroach in his bacon and eggs. Some genius at the back remarked that he should take no notice of that, because in all probability the cockroach had laid the egg. I regret that a certain amount of temper had been displayed in the House to-night, because we understood, both from the deputy leader of the Opposition and from the leader of the Country party, there was to be a sort of political understanding, that the criticism was not to be too caustic. But many of us have been considerably enlightened to-night by the information conveyed to us by one occupying almost a Ministerial position. He has placed before us facts which we were not previously in possession of, and we have received a deal of valuable information. I also regret that the Minister for Lands is not here. I understand he is away in the Eastern States. His absence is causing some anxiety in my constituency, anxiety as to what contracts he may make on the other side of the Commonwealth. I would have liked an assurance from the

Premier that there is no danger of the Minister for Lands, while away, transferring our Railways and our Savings Bank. I have argued in the past, and may even argue in the future, that Ministers constitute practically a goldfields Ministry, and that therefore their sympathies are not with the metropolitan area to the extent they should be. I complain that the Swan River is being polluted. There is no getting away from the fact. I noticed in the Press to-day the assertion that almost every civic body concerned is making a strong protest against the pollution of the river.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: What do the doctors say?

Mr. HARDWICK: I do not know, but I know that His Excellency's Speech states that in the metropolitan area there has been carried out an improved sewerage and drainage system, and that something like 10,500 houses have been connected up with it. I do not know what East Perth, or even Perth, is going to be like when we have 21,000 houses connected up. I have been acquainted with the river for a good many years, and I may say that the growth of weed in the river has been practically transformed. During the dry season last year hardly any water passed out of the river, and the consequence is that the whole of the liquid sewage has been cradled in the basin during that term. It has been suggested that there may be a further pollution of the river, and I hope that the voice of the member for East Perth will not be the only one, but that the members for the metropolitan area and even the member for Canning, will give some assistance in the direction of putting a stop to the polluting of the river. The Swan is a river of which we are all proud, and the Government are spending a huge sum of money on filter beds which, in my opinion, will have to be abandoned at some future date. Thousands of pounds have already been expended on the work, but the filters have been erected on an old mud bank which must cause trouble later on. The Government should exercise every caution in connection with this work. I would

ask the Premier to attend to my remarks. He lives in an adjacent suburb and I hope he will do all he possibly can to prevent the pollution of the beauty of Perth. At no distant date these filter beds will be the cause of very serious trouble. The Government, according to the testimony given in the House to-night, are actuated and guided by their expert officers, but on more than one occasion expert officers have made grave and serious mistakes.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Were you representing East Perth when the filters were put there?

Mr. HARDWICK: I did not put them there.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Did you support the Government who put them there?

Mr. HARDWICK: It was the hon. member's Government who put them there.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Be fair!

Mr. HARDWICK: And they owe the East Perth people an apology for having put them there.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): That is why you did not nominate.

Mr. HARDWICK: I nominated later on, and in consequence am here to-night. The Federal referenda proposals constitute a very contentious subject, and in these days of political truce it would be well for the leader of the House to take the matter in hand, and while we, though sent here for definite purposes, are helping the Government in every possible way, he might use his influence with the Federal Parliament to impress upon them the need for deferring the proposals. I do not say for all time, but at any rate for the time being. These great questions are bound to involve party conflict, and should, therefore, be delayed.

The Premier: You are the member for my district; I ask you to do it for me.

Mr. HARDWICK: We know that the leader of the House has great influence with the Federal Parliament and we look to him and his Government to endeavour to get deferred these proposals which, it appears to us, it would be unjust to force upon the people at present.

The Minister for Works: You have a greater opinion of the influence of any person with the Federal Parliament than I have.

The Premier: Why should I ask the people to take less power for the Federal Parliament than they have in the State?

Mr. HARDWICK: In the event of a party conflict occurring when we are supposed to be in the midst of a political truce—

The Premier: There need not be a party conflict.

Mr. HARDWICK: If a party conflict does ensue, it may have the effect of injuring the nation. When we should all be fighting without we will present the spectacle of conducting a conflict within.

The Premier: That is a matter within your own keeping; you need not fight unless you like.

Mr. HARDWICK: Mention has been made by the leaders of both Opposition parties that we should endeavour to move along smoothly. We have witnessed a little eruption to-night, but the party leaders have promised to give the Government all possible assistance in their power and I rather commend them for it, but, at the same time, I am inclined to take a different view from both party leaders. In my opinion the time is ripe for a coalition Government.

The Minister for Mines: Come over here.

Mr. HARDWICK: And if I do I shall occupy the position of leader. We should endeavour to emulate the example of New Zealand which, from Press reports, has formed a coalition Government. I rather sympathise with the Country party because they have given us to understand that there can be no political alliance unless they take power. I hardly see how it is possible in the circumstances, and if that is part of their hobbled-skirt policy it will be many years before they occupy the Ministerial bench.

Mr. James Gardiner: You worry about your own party.

Mr. HARDWICK: Our party is intact, and if there was an election tomorrow, I have not the slightest doubt

there would be a change from one side of the House to the other. Taking the events of to-day, we can see that a certain amount of disaffection exists in the ranks of the Government who have a very doubtful majority, if a majority at all. I am sure the present Cabinet could be improved upon, and the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) will agree with me when I say that the Honorary Minister should be returned to the ranks for a few months until this side of the House thought it desirable to call him up again. I do not know that we could afford to lose the services of the Minister for Works at present because we should need all his energies in connection with the implementation works at Fremantle. We might possibly retire the Attorney General for a few months. He tells us that the education system is perfect, but we on this side of the House are inclined to disagree with him. It was a great mistake for the Minister to allow the reduction in school hours, of which we have heard so much.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why?

Mr. HARDWICK: Because it represents lost time, and lost time is never regained. I can quite imagine the powerful oration the Attorney General would have delivered if the position had been reversed. He would have pointed out how the little toddlers were being deprived of education which would bring them up to manhood and womanhood and how necessary it was that no time should be lost. When we consider the brightness of the prospects for the coming season, the regulation relating to the reduction of school hours should be at once cancelled, and the children should be permitted once more to attend full time. I regret that the member for Mulchison (Mr. Holman) has been absent so long. I certainly should have liked to hear his debating powers on the administration of the Government during the last 12 months. A loss to this House is the eloquence of the member for Mulchison (Mr. F. F. Troy). I hope to hear him on the Address-in-reply.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: On whaling concessions.

Mr. HARDWICK: I was referring to the member for Mt. Magnet. Even the hon. member for Williams-Narrogin might give us some little education on spur railways. In conclusion I reiterate my protest in regard to the pollution of the Swan river.

Mr. Heitmann: That is a smellful subject.

Mr. HARDWICK: Extremely so, and one that should be remedied as early as possible. The leader of the House should understand that existing conditions cannot continue much longer. The people residing on the river banks will soon be up in open revolt against the nuisance. We have been told in the Speech that the conditions are so much better, but even so the position is extremely serious especially in a dry season such as the one just experienced. Not only the boarders of East Perth but the people in the whole of the City will be affected?

The Minister for Mines: Why, East Perth has the lowest death-rate of any of the wards in the City council.

Mr. HARDWICK: Certainly, because no microbes can live in the atmosphere. I commend this matter to the consideration of the leader of the House and hope he will give it very early attention.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [8.58]: When I addressed a few words to this House a few months ago, the agricultural outlook was very different from what it is now. My opening remarks were with reference to Government assistance and I urged that the Government should be very liberal in helping settlers. I have had some experience of the assistance given to agriculturists in other States, and I must congratulate the Government on the very efficient manner in which they have assisted the settlers of this State. I think it is the largest amount which has ever been advanced for that purpose in any State of the Commonwealth. I am very pleased that so many of the farmers have been assisted to the extent they have been, so that our coming harvest will not only recoup them but put them in a better position than they were

previously. I hope, too, that the State will receive considerable benefit from the proceeds of the coming harvest, if our present hopes are realised. With reference to the management of the various boards which have been appointed to distribute grain and superphosphates, fodder and various other commodities, no doubt difficulties have arisen, and many mistakes have been made. I think that the mistakes have been due chiefly to the fact that there has been too much centralisation. My experience in connection with boards of this description in other parts of the Commonwealth has been that the methods adopted there have been different from those adopted in Western Australia. In most parts of the Commonwealth the boards have not been centralised in the metropolis but their members have travelled from centre to centre generally with the Crown lands bailiff, who is equivalent, I suppose, to the land inspectors here. Further, the member for each district accompanies the board on their business, and the farmers meet the members of the board at different centres in the particular portion of the State that is to be assisted. The Crown lands bailiff, or the land inspector as the case may be, is thoroughly acquainted with the people of each district, and can tell whether their evidence is correct or not. After these visits there is no delay in the farmer getting his allowance, and he can then go where he likes and purchase what he requires to the amount which the Government choose to advance to him. This is a much better method than that adopted here. Fortunately the people of this State have not encountered so many droughts as have been encountered in other portions of the Commonwealth. I suppose therefore they are not so well prepared to deal with methods of such magnitude as they have been recently called upon to deal with. I have had some dealings with the local boards which have had control of advances to farmers, and I must say that whenever I have had occasion to interview one of these boards in favour of any client in my electorate I have received the utmost help and the greatest courtesy from one

and all. There is one thing that seems to mar the great good which has been done, and that is the regrettable action of the Minister for Lands in compelling people to mortgage all their goods and chattels for the purpose of paying the rents that are due. This has placed many struggling settlers, who have been assisted by the Government in respect to grain, fodder, and in some cases the necessities of life, in a very difficult position indeed. Every member in the House must realise that when a man has to mortgage his goods and chattels he is left totally dependent upon the assistance he is getting from the Government, because no merchant or business firm will give him any help. There is not the slightest doubt, in my opinion, that in many cases there is a tendency for the people to lean too much upon the Government. I am not speaking egotistically when I say that I have seen as many ups and downs and failures during my experience in Australia as any other man in the House, and yet I never once went to the Government to ask for assistance, except for help in the shape of horse-feed and seed wheat, for which I have always been able to repay the Government. But there is a tendency now on the part of all classes of the community, altogether apart from agriculturists, to be too ready to run to the Government for assistance in every tiddly-winking concern they are interested in.

The Premier: Especially when they know there is a sympathetic Government in power.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Much has been said during the present discussion on the Address-in-reply with reference to State trading concerns. Too much, in fact, has been said by way of criticism. It does not matter so much about whether these things can be made payable or not, but the question is whether the time is opportune for the Government to enter into competitive trade with private enterprises. I think that this State at the present juncture is practically in the making in regard to most of its industries. These are in their infancy. It requires all the money we can rake up

from whatever source we can get it to promote the development of the State. The purchase of the tramway system, for instance, did not place the people in any better position than they were in before. They had the trams prior to their purchase by the Government, but it has cost the State a considerable amount not only to purchase them but to keep them in repair. I think members will agree that such a large amount could have been better spent in building railways and providing water conservation throughout the State, and in thus placing the primary producer in a better position.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): If we had not borrowed the money for the tramways we would not have had it now.

Mr. HICKMOTT: We see fine prospects of a bumper harvest. The people in the Bruce Rock district, and from Kondinin further out along that line, were promised that the plant and the men should not be shifted from that railway, but that the line should be constructed straight away from Kondinin onwards.

The Minister for Works: Who promised it?

Mr. HICKMOTT: These people are still waiting for the line. They have been out there for some years, and were promised in the first instance that the line would be constructed within a very short time. They are still there, and there is no possibility of their getting railway facilities for the coming harvest. They have to cart their produce for a considerable distance as well as all their other requirements, and they also are going to be affected adversely during the coming harvest by the high price of jutes, which has already been referred to. Further than this, the difficulty in respect to overseas freights is going to rob the producers of a great deal of what they hope to get in the coming season. Instead of taking over such works as the tramways and going in for State enterprises at this period of the State's history, I think it would be better to spend that money on water conservation, or railways, on the development of min-

ing, the construction of harbours, and in giving proper facilities to our various ports.

The Premier: We did not purchase the tramways under existing conditions. They were bought two years ago and are showing a very nice profit.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are not purchasing any more just now.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I do not say the trams are a loss to the State, but that the time is not opportune to spend either loan funds or revenue on such work. We can spend the money to better advantage on reproductive works, or on placing people on the land which will eventually bring prosperity to the State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are doing that now.

Mr. HICKMOTT: There is another question I wish to say a few words upon, and that is the day labour system. A great mistake has been made by the present Government in abolishing the contract system. I know a good deal about labour of various kinds. I have been working all my life and am not afraid to do a little now. I think it must be patent to the most casual observer that we are not getting a proper return from the money expended in many ways. Hon. members on all sides of the House will bear me out in this. We only have to stand a little while opposite the new post office, which is being erected, and watch the men working there.

The Premier: That is a contract.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I know it is. I only desire to point out the difference between that and the work performed in other portions of the State, under the day labour system. Members can see that these men at the post office are giving better value for their money under the contract system. There is more supervision and better control. It appears to me that there is insufficient control under the day labour system. I do not say that the men are incapable of doing their work, but that there is no control over them. One cannot expect them to work as they work when the supervision is better.

Mr. Munsie: There are too many supervisors to the number of men employed.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Then the supervisors are not much good or we would get better value for the money they receive. We all know that, in our private capacity, if we pay a man 10s. a day and he only earns 7s. there is a big loss at the end of the year. The loss must, of course, be much greater when we employ thousands of men in the same way.

Mr. Foley: What would you do to a supervisor if he was not carrying out your wishes?

Mr. HICKMOTT: If I placed a man in charge of a gang of men and he did not get what I considered fair value for the money expended on the day labour system I should discharge him. This difficulty can very easily be got over. I have employed men and have also worked for a master in my time. I have been a considerable employer of men. For instance, I know something about brick making. A member the other evening remarked about the quality of bricks. I have handled hundreds of thousands of bricks and made them. I know what a brick is and also what stuff will make bricks.

The Premier: You should see some of ours, and you will find them as good as anything you can make.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It is a matter which requires some attention, and the funds of the State should not be frittered away in this direction.

Mr. Foley: There are too many supervisors out of sympathy with the day labour system.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I am pleased to hear that the Minister for Lands is going to bring forward the Land Reduction Bill. Various previous Ministers for Lands seem to have had a very peculiar method of settling people on the land.

The Premier: "Settling" them all right.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Along the Great Southern Railway and the South-Western Railway all the choice spots were taken up in the early days near existing railways, near the sea board and near the

metropolitan market, and were taken up at the cheapest rate. That is quite different from my experience of land transactions in any other part of the Commonwealth. The further people get away from the market, and from railway facilities and water conservations, the higher has the price of land been made in this State. Personally, I think that a great mistake has been made and that a great injury has been done to the State in that connection. I will mention one case which came under my notice. A farmer along the Brookton-Corrigin line told me recently that he had taken up land priced at £1 per acre. He expected to be able to obtain a considerable advance from the Agricultural Bank towards clearing and developing the land. However, when the Bank's inspector had viewed the land, he said "The Bank will not advance anything on this land." The farmer said "The land was priced by the Government at £1 per acre," whereupon the inspector said "The Bank's price for this land is 7s. 6d. per acre." The farmer was in consequence not able to proceed with the cultivation of the land.

Mr. Bolton: A Liberal Minister personally raised the price of land.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I am not alluding to the present Government. I know that was done by some previous Government. When I came here to look out for land I came under the impression, obtained from pamphlets supplied to me in the Eastern States, that land was obtainable anywhere in Western Australia for 10s. per acre, besides 160 acres free. The pamphlets contained wonderful illustrations of the growth of vegetation and cereals here.

The Premier: Did not the pamphlets mention that you could get millions of acres?

Mr. HICKMOTT: No.

The Premier: Then they could not have been issued by the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell).

Mr. HICKMOTT: I believe there was a mention of millions of acres. When I made inquiries, however, I had difficulty in obtaining a homestead for myself. I came here with six or seven children, and

I bought a piece of land which had a homestead connected with it. It was only after considerable difficulty that the Lands Department were induced to grant me the right to that homestead. Another matter of great importance to the people is that the new railways recently opened should be furnished with feeder roads. The Minister for Lands when at Brookton in connection with the official opening of the Brookton-Corrigin line promised to look into this question. The hon. gentleman said that if the prospects of the coming harvest were good enough the matter would be attended to. In my opinion, the prospects are quite good enough to warrant us in putting our roads in order. There is no possibility of many settlers' carting produce to the new lines unless something is done in road construction. To the east of Pingelly many farmers who have been carting 20 and 30 miles could reach the new line at distances of 8 to 11 miles, if only the roads were constructed. In some cases bridges are needed to cross creeks. The matter is one of urgent necessity. If the new railways are to be payable concerns, the feeder roads must be attended to between now and harvest time. Various hon. members have referred to the reduction in school hours. I do not know that the children in the country suffer greatly from the reduction. One day in three weeks we do not notice very much in the country. However, as one hon. member stated to-day, the out-back teachers receiving small salaries feel even the slight reduction much more than those in receipt of large salaries feel their reductions.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Should not the teachers suffer as well as the navvies?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Certainly. Still, any married man receiving 9s. or 10s. a day has all he can do to make both ends meet under present conditions. Such men, I consider, should not be subjected to reduction in either wages or working time.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): What about the man who has no work?

Mr. HICKMOTT: That is a matter on which I intended to say a few words. I shall not refer to the Honorary Minister's "dining-room" or "boarding-house" or anything of that kind; but if there are any able-bodied men receiving meals, young men physically fit to go to the front, they should have their meals stopped and be sent to Blackboy Camp.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Let me assure you such unemployed have been turned down.

Mr. HICKMOTT: That alters the position. No man physically fit should receive free meals. Such a man should be sent to do something for his country if not for himself. The matters on which I have touched are, I think, of considerable importance to the State as a whole; and I trust that something will be done at all events towards providing roads in order to assist the settlers to get their harvest to market by the very nearest railway station.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [9.25]: I had no intention of addressing myself to the subject under review, but during the debate this afternoon I was interested by interjections from Ministers in defence of their attitude on what I may perhaps be permitted to term the negotiations relative to the freezing works at Wyndham. It has been denied by Ministers that there was a contract in this connection. That is the reason why I am addressing myself to the subject to-night.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You will never get to the bottom of it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I maintain that the country should know exactly the position of those negotiations, or of that contract, or whatever the Honorary Minister and other Ministers desire to call it.

The Minister for Works: You have been told everything in connection with it.

Mr. TAYLOR: The story has been told in dribs and drabs. It is time the Minister for Works made a clear statement of the facts to the House.

The Minister for Works: The Premier has done that.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You will not believe him when he tells you.

Mr. TAYLOR: Ministers have not told this House or the country the position. There must be something underlying it. The Honorary Minister by way of interjection this afternoon said that there was no contract and that the departmental heads, or a board of departmental heads, advised the Government not to go on with the negotiations or the interim contract with Mr. Nevanas.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong in that.

Mr. TAYLOR: When the member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) was addressing the House there was a cross fire of interjections which conveyed that meaning to me. Now let the Honorary Minister or the Minister for Works tell this House how Mr. Nevanas came into the matter at all.

The Minister for Works: The Premier told you that.

Mr. TAYLOR: It appears that Mr. Nevanas was considered by the Government a competent man to furnish an estimate of the cost of a structure for freezing works. He was considered capable to give in detail the value of the proposition and also to draw the plans. Did Mr. Nevanas do that work for nothing? I presume he got a salary or a lump sum. Then we are told that when the plans were submitted the departmental officers advised the Minister, and through him Cabinet, that Mr. Nevanas could not complete the work. That is what the Honorary Minister stated this afternoon.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You are wrong there. That is where you are mistaken.

Mr. TAYLOR: The departmental officers, we are told, advised the Government that the freezing works could not be completed for the money and that it was necessary to cancel something that did not exist—an interim contract, as there was no other contract. The position is perfectly clear. Then the Honorary

Minister and the Minister for Works contend that the Government have made an advantageous deal because they have saved a certain amount of money on the purchase of certain material essential for the work. The Honorary Minister did not say that, had Mr. Nevanas not entered into the contract before purchasing the timber, then, if the Government had decided to do the work, as they are doing it now, they would have gone into the market and would have bought this material themselves.

The Minister for Works: No, they would not.

Mr. TAYLOR: I suppose the real truth of the matter is that the freezing works would not have gone on now but for this purchase made by Mr. Nevanas. The Government had to take the material over, or did take it over; and that means the Government are going on with the proposal. I venture to say that had the Government in the first place proceeded to do the work by day labour, as they are proposing now to do it, they must have entered the market to get all the material needed, or so much to start with. Especially does this seem plain when we are informed by the Minister, by interjection, that time was the essence of the contract and that the Government needed this structure completed as quickly as possible in order to supply the market with meat. We heard that by interjection. Would that have necessitated the early purchase of the material? It is only an easy way of getting out of it by saying that it was taken over on the recommendation of the architect and that the material was purchased from Nevanas on a five per cent. basis.

Mr. George: Had Nevanas paid for it?

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not know any more about it than the hon. member.

The Minister for Works: Do you want to know?

Mr. George: Yes.

The Minister for Works: He had not.

Mr. George: Then you financed him.

The Minister for Works: We had to.

Mr. TAYLOR: I suppose the position is that Nevanas, on the strength of having

an interim contract with the Government, was able to go and make purchases from business people. He was able to do this on the papers which he showed. We have been told this afternoon that Nevanas was a man of straw, that he was a man who was absolutely without capital.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And also without character.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am surprised at the action of the Government in bringing a man to Western Australia in connection with such a proposed work, whom they knew to be without character.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I did not say he was without character; I said we were also told he was without character.

Mr. TAYLOR: I beg the Minister's pardon, I misunderstood him. It looks as if Nevanas had been able to come to this State without anything and go away from it with a few thousand pounds without having done anything.

The Premier: You would say anything to suit your purpose.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Premier takes the wrong view of it. What I want to know is whether there was a contract let, and how Nevanas, who it is said had no money, was able to make purchases. There must have been a secret agreement between Nevanas and the Government, otherwise he would not have been able to purchase £60,000 or £70,000 worth of material, which the Government have taken over on a five per cent. basis.

The Premier: I have told you all; it is in *Hansard*.

Mr. TAYLOR: I am not so much worried about Nevanas as I am about the contract and the manner in which it was made. This party is pledged against contracts, and this was a secret contract. If there be an objection to open contracting, that is, contracting by calling for tenders by means of advertisements in the Press—if that be an objectionable form of contracting to the party of which I am a member, how much more objectionable must it be to the party to find that the Government have entered into a secret contract, a contract that no

one knows anything at all about? Ministers have not taken the party into their confidence on this question. If they had done so, they would not have been permitted to let this secret contract. If a no-confidence motion had been moved over the matter, what position would it have placed this party in? The party would have had to support secret contracts, and support a Government responsible for entering into such a contract, or else help to put them out. We would have to abandon principles that we were sent here to support.

The Premier: That is a matter for yourself.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Premier knows well that this party has no desire to put him out, but members want to know exactly what the position is, and I want the workers to know. Would we be justified in condemning another party for doing something which we on this side, while regarding it as a crime, have already done? If it is a crime in our eyes for the Liberal party to let contracts by tender, does the fact that we have carried out this practice make it a virtue? We have stumped the country against this kind of thing and we must now be open and fair; we cannot be hypocrites. If we consider that letting contracts is bad, then contracting is bad in any case, but no man living can support a secret contract; it cannot be supported under any circumstances. There have been numerous contracts let by this Government during the past three years, and there have been controversies in the Press about them, and statements have been made in connection with them.

The Minister for Works: What contracts were they?

Mr. TAYLOR: There was the contract in connection with the manufacture of pipes in Germany. There was some discussion in this Chamber over that, and in the Press also. Even that contract, so I am informed, was really not an open contract.

Mr. George: It was very fishy.

Mr. TAYLOR: I understand that the notice was placed either behind or somewhere about the door of the Tender

Board office; it was never advertised in the Press. I do not know whether that is true, but the Minister can enlighten us. But it is about time that the Labour party in this House, and the supporters out of it, decided whether they wanted contracts or not.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Let the party decide and abide by its decision.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have done so for years, and I am not going to stand here now and see the Labour principles varied by the party with which I am associated. We have heard a great deal about the implement works, and the Minister for Works should certainly have some inquiry made. It is idle for the Minister to say that if we remove a man from the service, and allow him to have an inquiry, every man who is removed will ask that a similar inquiry should be held into the circumstances of his removal also. The implement works, however, is a special case. In this instance a man was brought to this State from South Australia to inaugurate a new system. Mr. Davies, the late manager, started the implement works at North Fremantle and there was a great flourish of trumpets and he was described as the most capable man who could be found to set these works in motion.

The Minister for Mines: He was the worst importation we ever made.

Mr. TAYLOR: I was at the opening of the works and I heard him eulogised by the then Minister for Lands, Mr. Bath, who described him as the most capable man it was possible to find to fill the position of manager of the works.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He was, on paper.

Mr. TAYLOR: Mr. Davies was responsible for committing this country to an expenditure of £80,000.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He robbed this country as well.

Mr. TAYLOR: If I were a Minister of the Crown and I thought that the country had been robbed by one of its officers, I would bring that officer to book; I would not remain in my seat in

the House and make a statement like that without proving it and punishing the culprit. If there was at any time before to-night justification for an inquiry, the necessity for it now is overwhelming, and the more light there is thrown on the matter now the better it will be. Mr. Davies should be vindicated or he should be condemned.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He is a thief.

Mr. TAYLOR: I hope the House will not rest now until the inquiry is commenced. Mr. Davies says that he has nothing to fear. Then why not give him the inquiry? Yet we find that the inquiry is withheld.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The previous Government gave Dave White an inquiry and they proved him to be a thief. I gave Dr. Blanchard an inquiry—

Mr. TAYLOR: I am not dealing with past history; I am dealing with the present. I am dealing with a man who is suffering from an injustice. If the interjections which the Honorary Minister has made appear in the Press, or in *Hansard*, what will this man's character be worth?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is not worth a struck match now.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the man gets an inquiry he will be able to vindicate his character, or the Minister will be able to prove his statements. The inquiry now is justified more than ever, and I hope the Minister will lose no time in having it conducted.

Mr. George: They must now.

Mr. TAYLOR: The man should have a select committee or a Royal Commission, and if a Royal Commission be appointed I hope it will consist of someone who will give a decision which will not cause as much criticism as the decision of the recent Royal Commission which was appointed.

The Premier: You sit behind the Government and you say it should not be entrusted with the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. TAYLOR: I did not say that. What I said was that a Commission should be appointed whose decision would be more satisfactory than that recently given.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Let a judge be appointed.

Mr. TAYLOR: In a matter such as this, where the inquiry will deal with the intricacies of implements of all shades and brands, and all sorts of mechanism, we need to appoint someone conversant with this class of work and who understands costs. It is a very involved position, that of manager of such an institution. So far as this House is concerned there are very few members in it who would be able to give as much assistance in unravelling a matter like this as the member for Murray-Wellington. That hon. member has been associated with machinery and conducted a foundry here for many years, and a man with his knowledge and experience would give invaluable services were he on such a Commission. I would like an inquiry to be conducted so that we might know what was in the innuendoes which we have heard to-night.

The Minister for Works: You have seen the papers.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Minister knows that I saw a portion of the file for a few minutes, but I am not making use of that. I take it for granted the Minister allowed me to peruse that file for my own information.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You are on a dead 'un.

Mr. TAYLOR: I only want an inquiry. The argument about other employees will not hold, because their position cannot be compared with the position of a manager of implement works where so much capital expenditure has been involved. His statement is that the Minister for Works made the position intolerable, and he said that to preserve his reputation as an implement workshops manager he tendered his resignation. He published that in the Press, and the Minister replied. The controversy itself merits an inquiry. The Government should welcome an inquiry. From private

conversations I know the Minister for Works feels satisfied that he has taken the right course, that no other course was open to him, and I venture to say had the manager not tendered his resignation he would have been asked to resign.

The Minister for Works: No, he would not.

Mr. TAYLOR: Well, perhaps he would have been dismissed. The manager pointed out that, to preserve his reputation, he could no longer work there. The charges have been made, and he is anxious for an inquiry. How is it possible to compare this situation with that of an ordinary civil servant, on a salary of from £300 to £500 a year, with no responsibility in respect to capital expenditure, asking for an inquiry? I hope, for the sake of the Government and of this man's character, that he will get an inquiry.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: And for the sake of the country.

Mr. TAYLOR: Yes, the country needs it. When these impeachments are made, the country expects the Government to act straightforwardly. In regard to the policy of the Government this session, it is strictly limited, owing to the condition of war.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is very good.

Mr. TAYLOR: We will see that when it comes before us. I hope that portion of it dealing with the proposed improved conditions of mining will be favourably considered by the House, and not treated on party lines. In the Press, even within the last 12 months, the whole position has been pointed out. Articles have been written dealing with the health of the miners and the amount of money contributed by the goldfields community and by the Government to afford the men and their wives and families at least a bare existence when the bread-winner is unable any further to follow his avocation underground. I hope this position will be forced on the House, and that members will be impressed with the necessity for providing improved conditions underground. I trust the measure

will get the sympathetic consideration it deserves.

The Premier: You need not worry about its passage here.

Mr. TAYLOR: I do not know; it met with a strenuous opposition here last year.

The Premier: Not a very effective opposition.

Mr. TAYLOR: The position of parties in the House is somewhat different from what it was last year.

The Premier: There is no doubt about the Bill passing this House.

Mr. TAYLOR: We were better able to press it through this House last year than we are now.

The Premier: The members of the cross Opposition benches have promised us their support.

Mr. TAYLOR: That being so, I suppose the measure will pass this House. But these promises do not always work out in detail. A Bill gets into Committee, when we find the member who promised his support saying "It is not the principle I object to, but the detail." And in the adjustment of these details very often a Bill is wrecked. However, let us hope that the conference which sat to-day and is to continue to-morrow will not harrass those members on the cross-benches, but will allow them to give their support to the Bill. The measure is badly required. For seven or eight years past we have tried, ineffectively, to improve the mining conditions. The session has every appearance of being a short one, and, judging by the speeches of the deputy leader of the Opposition and the new leader on the cross-benches it is likely to be conducted amicably. I hope the members on the Opposition cross-benches will be permitted by their conference to carry out all the friendly promises made during this debate.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco) [9.52]: The member who has just sat down treated the House to one of his usual violent outbreaks. I am not going to question the right of any hon. member to express his opinion upon any question of importance to the country, but I want to say that any hon. member who feigns

such indignation and who believes, as the hon. member said he believed, that the Government are holding something back in connection with the Wyndham freezing works transaction, and who says distinctly, as the hon. member did, that there is something underlying it—making a distinct insinuation against the Ministry—I say it is his bounden duty to cross the floor and force the Government out of the position they hold. Any hon. member who professes to believe, as the hon. member tried to lead us to believe he does, that something dishonourable has been done—

Mr. Taylor: No, No.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I wrote down the word as he uttered it. He said there was something underlying, something the Government were keeping back. After the Minister controlling the department has made a full statement, and after the Premier has made a full statement explaining the whole transaction, we get these insinuations that there is something underlying the matter, that the Government are keeping something back. I say it is the bounden duty of any member holding this belief, who desires to act honestly, to cross the floor, if he is a supporter of the Government, and force the Government out of their position.

Mr. George: Then, according to you, if he does not do that he is dishonest.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Undoubtedly he is dishonest. If I believed that any member of this Government did something dishonest and unbecoming him and his colleagues as a Government, I would throw all party principles to the wind, cross the floor and force them out. I realise the position exactly. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hardwick) in a humorous speech, wanted to know where was the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor), and said he had not heard his voice for a long time. I think he played upon the feelings of the member for Mt. Margaret and so brought him to his feet. The member for East Perth dealt also with the matter of the Savings Bank, and expressed a fear that the Minister for Lands while in the East might enter into some negotiations in regard to that bank.

If the hon. member would take the trouble to go into the present position of the Savings Bank, he would probably find occasion to welcome any agreement that might be brought about between the States and the Commonwealth amalgamating the two banks. I do not know whether hon. members are aware of the respective positions of the two banks at present.

Mr. Foley: We have a good idea, though.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Perhaps the hon. member has, and yet, perhaps, if I give him a few figures it will rather stagger him, and serve to remove the idea he has. During the first quarter of 1915 the Commonwealth Bank's deposits in this State increased by £42,785. For the year ended 30th June last the State Savings Bank in its general business had an excess of withdrawals over deposits of £133,002. In the schools department of the State Savings Bank there was an excess of deposits over withdrawals of £2,622, leaving a total excess of withdrawals over deposits of £130,380. Does it not clearly prove what I said last session, namely, that the Commonwealth Savings Bank is going to win out, because it is the people's bank, and the people are flocking to it? We find that the deposits have steadily increased ever since the Commonwealth Bank was established in this State.

Mr. Thomson: Why cannot we increase our rate of interest?

The Premier: As a matter of fact we have.

Mr. Thomson: Well, why not support your own bank, instead of putting ledger accounts into the Commonwealth Bank?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: If people in this State are wise they will immediately start an agitation for the amalgamation of the two banks; because as sure as the sun rises, the Commonwealth Bank is going to win out. The people are putting their money into that bank because there is a big national sentiment behind it. It is the duty of the people of the State to start that agitation.

The Premier: We are prepared to consider an amalgamation as soon as we are

satisfied that such amalgamation is fair to the State, but not before.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I know that is the position. There is an enormous amount of public feeling in the State against amalgamation under any terms whatever. If we get the public supporting us on this question, and if we ask for a fair scheme of amalgamation, I believe we are much more likely to receive consideration from the Commonwealth.

The Premier: One of the issues of the last election was the amalgamation of the Federal and State Savings Banks, and they got an absolute pronouncement from the people and have not gone on with it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I wish to briefly refer to some remarks regarding the reduction of school hours. The member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) was rather rash in his statements when he endeavoured to lead the House to believe that, by the reduction of the hours of teachers and scholars, the Government had interfered with free education. Other members who have spoken were not quite so rash as he was, but dealt with it in a more broad-minded and temperate manner. The member for Swan in my opinion was most extravagant, and showed that he had not gone very deeply into the matter. Had he inquired he would have found that in New South Wales and Victoria a large number of schools have been closed altogether since the war broke out because of the inability of the Governments of those States to procure teachers.

Mr. Allen: That does not apply here.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Not one school in this State has been closed on that account.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I have it in writing that they have.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I inquired at the Education Department yesterday and was assured that not one school had been closed through the lack of teachers or for any other reason.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is the reason I have been given.

The Attorney General: No, they have not.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Do you approve of the closing of the schools?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Whilst it is true that schools are closed on one day in three weeks I believe, as has been pointed out by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott), that no great harm has been done to any scholar as a result.

Mr. Nairn: You do not understand it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It is all very well for the hon. member to talk like that, but I guarantee that at least 50 per cent. of the children lose as much schooling at any other time. Irregularity in attendance prevents the advancement of a class. Any teacher knows that if some of the scholars remain away, the whole class is thrown back because it is necessary to repeat certain lessons in order to bring the scholars who stayed away up to the others. If all the scholars are away on the same day, that disability does not exist and the fact of losing one day in three weeks represents no great hardship. Side by side with this reduction, however, the State has done a great work in providing means of education in other directions. Continuation classes have been established and most educationists recognise that this sort of class is the most beneficial to the young people as they are enabled to continue their studies after attaining the age of 14, which in many cases they otherwise could not do. In 1913 we had 181 continuation classes; in 1914 there were 226, or an increase of 45, and this year they have increased to 275, or by 49 during this year of war. It might be information to members to know that we have at James-street the largest continuation school in Australia. The average weekly attendance at continuation classes last year was 1,829, which is almost equal to the figures for the State of New South Wales. This proves conclusively that while the Government, so far from interfering with the great principle of free education, have merely by a pressing necessity been compelled to slightly reduce the hours of teaching in the day schools, they have, on the other hand, made enormous increases in the facilities for those who will benefit

more greatly by the instruction imparted to them.

Mr. Allen: It is as free, but not so full.

Mr. Nairn: The secondary schools will be most affected.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I wish to refer to a remark by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Gilchrist) who tried to lead us to believe that the action of the pastoralists in that district in refusing to contribute towards the payment of the rabbit-proof fence was not an act of repudiation. If the hon. member had traced the history of the fence a little instead of dealing with other matters which did not concern us so much he could, perhaps, have given us a little more information. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) made a very pertinent interjection by inquiring, "Did not they ask for a fence?" As a matter of fact, these very squatters waited on the then Government and asked for the erection of the fence. They also undertook to pay for it by rating themselves, and the Government of the day recognised the justice of the request and advanced £66,000 and created a board to spend the money and to see that the necessary rates were levied for the purpose of paying interest and sinking fund.

Mr. Foley: They spent the money all right.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Some time later a number of pastoralists ceased to pay their rates for one reason or another—I am not in a position to say why; it is said because of the bad season—but eventually the board sued one of them for arrears and the court decided that the Act was faulty and the prosecution did not succeed. The Government were then forced into the position of amending the Act to enable the board to levy the rates. The amending Bill was passed by this House, but in another place a representative of the squatters endeavoured to insert an amendment which was foreign to the measure and which sought to reduce by 50 per cent. the tax provided for in the Bill. When the amendment was returned to this Chamber, the Government refused to accept it and the leader of the Opposition

and the member for Northam, who were members of the previous Government and understood the position, pointed out that the amendment was distinctly unfair. Subsequently the Government asked for a conference and at the conference the same representative of the pastoralists stood hard and fast to his amendment and the Bill was wrecked. If the member for Gascoyne were in his seat, I would ask him if any of the pastoralists had paid one penny in rates since the day the Bill was lost. I believe I am correct in saying that not one penny has been paid, and that the £66,000, so far as we can see at present, is lost to the State. If the hon. member does not recognise repudiation as the very mildest term that can be applied to that action, I do not know what would satisfy him.

The Premier: So long as they continue their present attitude, it is nothing short of robbery.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Absolute robbery; they are breaking a distinct promise; they secured the money under false pretences and are now repudiating their transaction. While I have been struck by some of the assertions made during the debate, one thing which has impressed me more than another has been the omission of any reference to what has become famous as the great wheat muddle.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You will hear about it before long.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I expected that the Government would be inundated with questions and that every member on the Opposition side would have something to say.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: They are waiting for the return of the Minister for Lands.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Although the session has now extended over two weeks, and although the agreement has been placed on the Table of the House, not one member on the Opposition benches has so far referred to it.

Hon. J. Mitchell. Oh yes, we have.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I think we are justified in asking why no reference has been made to it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are quite wrong.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Why do you ask; do you doubt it?

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I will say why I believe reference has not been made to it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are wrong in saying that.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Members know full well that the actions of the Grain and Foodstuff Board in conjunction with the Flourmillers' Association will not bear the light of day. We have the spectacle of a board, brought into existence to protect the interests of the Government and of the consumer, practically entering into a conspiracy with the flour millers of this State to overreach the Government in connection with our food supplies.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They are an honest board and behaved decently.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Their very actions prove that they did not act as they should have done to safeguard the interests of the people.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You are quite wrong.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: Let me point out that the Commission for the Control of Trade in War Time conferred with the Grain and Foodstuff Board on no fewer than three occasions in regard to the disposal of the surplus wheat, and on another occasion both those bodies discussed the same question with the Minister. The Grain and Foodstuff Board did not on any one of those occasions mention that any agreement had been entered into, except one with three country flour mills which was merely that they should be allowed to complete contracts they had made. The commission were agreeable to that, but after the commission sought to get the flour millers of the State to grist the Argentine wheat, and when the conditions which the flour millers required were not suitable to the Royal Commission and they were successful in entering into an agreement with two other millers who, by the way placed patriotism far above greed for monetary gain, the Grain and Foodstuff Board discovered that they had entered into an agreement some time

previously with all the flour mills of the State to retain the wheat in their possession.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That was accepted throughout the whole of the country.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It was not. There is not a tittle of evidence to support the statement that it was accepted. The whole explanation shows clearly that the agreement was not known of and was not mentioned.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is generally accepted in the country districts.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: What is the use of saying that? What do the country districts know about it? I have pointed out that the commission and the board met on three occasions and also discussed the question with the Minister on another occasion and on none of these occasions did the Grain and Foodstuff Board state that they had entered into such an arrangement. Why did not they say from the start if the arrangement was understood throughout the country districts? It was not mentioned until the conditions for gristing the Argentine wheat were under discussion. The flour millers could not be induced to see it in a reasonable light and other arrangements had to be made.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Minister promised that the gristing should be allowed in the country.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: No promise was made at all. We have heard a lot to-night, and many insinuations, in regard to the existence of an agreement. I want to show what a different construction would have been put on the matter had things turned out in another way. When the agreement was placed upon the Table of the House it was found that it meant a saving of £1,125 over what would have been made if the gristing had been handed over to other firms on their conditions. We find the leading newspaper of the State saying, "They only made a saving of £1,125." How many dirty insinuations would have flown around if this had been on the other side, and if a contract had been made with somebody charging £1,125 more than the wheat could have been gristed for? But when

a saving is made of £1,125 they say, "It is only a paltry sum of £1,125." I have only dealt with a few questions, but now wish in conclusion to say a few words in respect to the Government boarding-house. I desire to refer to this because members on both sides of the House have criticised the Government. I take an entirely different view from that voiced by other members of the Chamber. I claim that it is the duty of any Government to look after the citizens of the State at a time of crisis like the present. There may be men receiving assistance there who do not deserve it. It would be foolish to deny that. So long as the Government were unable to say to these men, "There is work for you to do," it was their bounden duty to see that they had a place of shelter, and at least sufficient food to keep body and soul together. It is all very well to say that these men should be put to work. If they had had to be put to work they would have had to receive the recognised rate of wages. It is not fair to take advantage of them because we are going through a very difficult time of depression and endeavour to cut down wages by employing them at less than the usual pay.

The Premier: That is the point underlying all their criticism.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: That is so. If the Government could not supply them with work at the recognised rate of wages it is at least their bounden duty to see that they do not want the necessaries of life.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is about the strongest attack which has been made upon the Government.

Question put and passed, the Address adopted.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 11th August, 1915.

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

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Honorary Minister: Report of Medical, Health, Factories, and Early Closing Department for year ended 31st December, 1914.

QUESTION—LAND RESUMPTIONS, MULLEWA.

Mr. HEITMANN asked the Minister for Works: As some owners of land resumed by the Government for railway purposes at Mullewa have been waiting over a year for a settlement, will he facilitate the appointment of a Judge to sit in arbitration as to the prices to be paid for the land?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Of the 16 claims received six remain unsettled, and negotiations for private settlement are at present being conducted with the department. A claimant can at any time, by application to the court in the ordinary way, obtain hearing of his claim by the Compensation Court, and whilst the department is prepared to facilitate the hearing, it desires that every means should first be exhausted before a claimant or the department is put to the expense of court proceedings.